

# THE LONDON READER

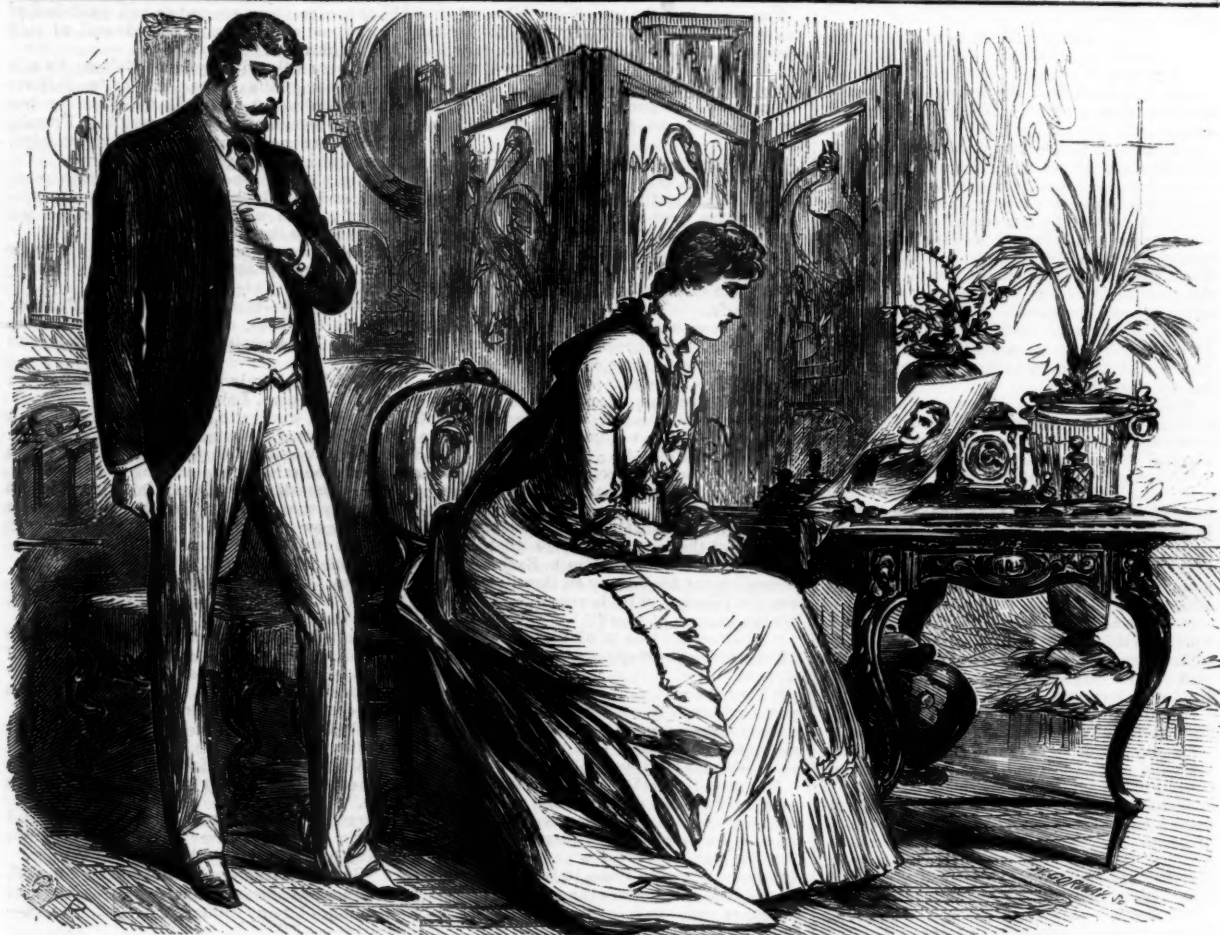
of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1883.—VOL. LIV.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 2, 1889.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[“YES, IT IS HE!” VIOLET SAID, IN AN ALTERED VOICE. “THAT IS THE MAN I TRUSTED!”]

## THE EYES OF THE PICTURE.

### CHAPTER XVII.—(continued.)

GREVILLE was, on such an occasion, an admirable companion. He let his friend alone, and by the time they were out of the park and in the leafy shades of the Gardens, Erlscourt's vigorous brain had recovered itself.

“If you're not in a hurry, Greville,” he said, “let us stop here a bit. I want to say something.”

They threw themselves on the grass. Erlscourt began at once,—

“You were surprised at my asking Venner to come with us. You don't know him much, do you?”

“Not much. As I told you, only by having been occasionally to King's.”

“I want you to take me to King's.”

“Leigh!” exclaimed Greville, “what the deuce are you after?”

“No harm,” said the other, not moving his position. “At present, my idea is to cultivate this Venner's acquaintance.”

“But you—who hate these sort of clubs—you know it is nothing but the highest of high play—”

“Gambling,” put in Erlscourt. “I know—nevertheless I am going there—or anywhere else where I can meet Venner. You must ask no questions, Greville, and you must say not a word to anyone—not even Dora,” and he could not resist a smile. “If I continue going, and you hear it said I am taking to play, going the high road to ruin and all that, don't contradict it. Run me down for once in your life. I suppose King's is not different from its kind. Any goose that can be plucked is welcome, member or not.”

“Oh, yes,” said Greville, pulling up grass rather viciously. “You're trying my friendship, old fellow.”

“It's a better way to try it than some others,” was the answer very gently given.

Greville flushed up.

“What do you mean?” he said, turning his face aside.

“I've had it in my mind often to say something to you,” said Erlscourt, “only we've both been so busy that we've seen little of one

another. You've been half inclined to be vexed with me sometimes, and—well, perhaps a little jealous—”

“Leigh!” said Greville, struck with remorse, laying his hand on Erlscourt's.

“Nay, hear me out. I am not blaming you—it is hard, but it isn't my fault that Dora is so much in my care. I can't always avoid it without letting her think that I don't like to have her, and I could not do that. Don't let anything come between us, however slightly,” said Erlscourt, with his earnest eyes looking so straightly and frankly into Greville's. “If I were heart-free, could I for an hour, a minute, try to stand in your way?”

“Oh! Leigh, don't think I ever dreamt that; how can I explain it so as to make you understand what it really was—that I never loved you one whit the less—how angry I was with myself. You see you are free to come and go as you like; I am shut out; and I suppose that made me feel bitter sometimes—always against my will. You must forgive it.”

“There can be no such word between you and me,” said Erlscourt, and for a minute the two hands held one another silently.

"It is only Emmie's folly," Erlacourt resumed, after a minute or two, "that parts you two. One can see through her in an instant. The whole world might go crash if I were safe. I suppose I must be ill-constituted not to be grateful for so much affection, but I confess I am not. How can I be when it worries me on every side?"

"Do you mean," asked Greville, bluntly, "that she keeps me out of the way to give you a fair field?"

"Exactly. I believe Dora sees through the device too."

"But why?" began Greville, when some words Erlacourt had not long uttered came into his mind—"if I were heart-free," he had said.

"I thought that was nothing much," he said, in a low voice, more following out his train of thought than speaking to his friend, "at least, I was not sure."

"What was nothing much?"

"I knew you admired Violet Herbert, of course, as we all did; and I have often fancied there was something more," said Greville, not finding it easier to go on because Erlacourt remained so silent. "I see it all now."

But his face remained grave. He did not like it, nor his share in bringing his friend and Violet Herbert together, and he was too honest to say he did.

Yet it bore both that there was a difference between them. It was Erlacourt whose necessarily intense pain forced him to break through the momentary barrier.

"Mortuo, don't think hardly of her," he said, "don't think me blinded because I love her. Someone has said that what we call the blindness of love is often only imitation. I know what some of you think of her, what some of you would say if you knew how close she is to me; but you must not think so."

"My dear old fellow," said Greville, "I never did think any harm of her, never. I have often defended her, and I always liked her. It was you I thought of, not her. She can only be glad to have won such a heart as yours."

"And I am to weigh and measure and be a little doubtful whether the treasure is worth all I pay for it? That isn't your fashion, Greville. Don't misunderstand me—I understand you," and the soft voice changed to a still softer tone. "Well, I won't say your fears for me are unfounded—in one sense, I don't see my way very clearly. I never may—nor may the way be clear this side of eternity. But to love—to be loved—that will always be mine; that, not words between us can change."

"I know," said Greville, and thought of Dora. "I am glad you have told me, Leigh."

"I wanted you to know. You will have no shadow of doubt about me, if you must needs have as yet about Dora. I cannot hold two loves nor leave one for another. And as to what I asked you—about King's I mean—I will say so far as that it is in Violet's service I am acting—and I may want your help further. I will not ask if I may count on it."

"Leigh, you know I would go to the end of the earth for you."

"Meanwhile," said the other, springing up. "I don't want you to go any further than my own door, and we have talked long enough. I won't thank you for those last words."

And yet the caressing hand he laid on Greville's shoulder seemed to mean something more than good fellowship.

Gilbert Venner put a very different interpretation on Erlacourt's evident desire not to let him drop. He thought his *ruse* had succeeded—that those geniuses were always to be caught through their vanity.

"And we shall see our high and mighty painter follow my lead like a spaniel," he said, triumphantly, to himself. "That was a chance coincidence. The girl looked like that once, once here! I suppose that deceived me, but he said that he got the face from a model, and she'd never go for that—too deuced proud."

She's either dead or married. So I've no fear of you, my handsome painter. You've no cause to be my enemy. Don't think I should care for you in that position. I've got an idea you could be ruthless enough for all those velvety eyes of yours."

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE club familiarly called "King's" was anything but a shabby affair. Money had been put into it—how obtained it were best not to inquire, and certainly money was made out of it.

For, as its promoters had said, and justly, you cannot make money without spending money.

The place was handsomely got up, in a rather showy and gorgeous style, but that suited the taste of the members.

The large card-room one particular night was, as usual, brilliant with light. There were a good many men gathered round the tables, not playing as it for relaxation, but with the absorption of men to whom play in the business life.

They were a very mixed group, of various classes and various nationalities—not the best specimens of their different races either. George King was not present, but Venner, whom no one suspected to be more than a member like themselves, was seated at a small table playing *vingt-et-un* with three others. He was winning—he generally did; and looked satisfied in proportion as the other faces grew long. Of course, who was going ahead.

"I haven't seen Greville for some time," said one of the men, more often than the remarkable Wilson of the Stock Exchange, who perhaps spent his money as lightly because it was got lightly. "He is your friend, Venner. What's become of him?"

"I half expect him to night," said Venner. "I met him yesterday, and he said he might come in."

"There he is!" said a man at another table near, overhearing. "Who's that with him?"

Several looked up. Strangers were by no means scarce in that club, the rules being, as usual with its kind, very elastic.

Any member was at liberty to bring in friends when he liked, and no restriction was placed on their use of cards or billiard tables. So that the appearance of another person with Mortuo Greville was no surprise in itself—it was a surprise to two or three to recognise in that person Leigh Erlacourt the painter.

Venner rose and went to meet the new comers.

"Very glad to see you both," said he, smiling, well-bred enough not to express his satisfaction. "I didn't know you were much of a player, Mr. Erlacourt?"

Erlacourt had strung himself up to meet this man without any self-betrayal—to show neither by look nor manner, nor even by the absence of anything proper to the occasion, what he felt.

His talisman, now and always, was the thought of his darling. What have not men done under the spell of some loved name?

He gave his hand to Venner as he would to any ordinary acquaintance—perfectly easily, withdrawing it as usual.

"I am not much of a player," he said, "but Greville was telling me about the club, and I thought I should like to have a look at it."

"Which means," thought Venner, "that he likes to come where he thinks he's appreciated. It's a good thing to understand human foibles." Then aloud and laughing, "Don't lose too much money. We play rather high here."

"There's not much interest in low stakes," said Erlacourt. "Risk has its fascination."

"I'm afraid it has. Shall you play yet?"

"Perhaps—; don't let me keep you from your play."

He moved away, following Greville, who sat

down at a table, and called the attendant to bring a pack of cards.

Venner, although busy with his own game, managed to keep an eye on that table at which the two painters had been joined by some Frenchmen Greville had met at the club before.

He gathered that there was some discussion as to what the game should be. Finally, Nap was chosen—Nap that may be so innocent.

It wasn't very innocent at King's as a rule. In this case there seemed to be a good deal of money lost and won, and a good deal of talk and laughter.

Venner easily distinguished Erlacourt's soft tones amongst the others. His crisp, delicate accent contrasted curiously with the broken English, interlarded with provincial French, of the other two men, who, to Venner's vexation, happened not to be gentlemen.

They also happened to be inveterate gamblers, and were highly delighted at the unconcerned way in which the stranger consented to any stakes they proposed.

Greville on one occasion decried, although he had been winning.

"It's awfully high!" said he.

"What does it matter?" said Erlacourt, opening his eyes, and throwing down more gold. "You are winning; it's for the losers to object."

"Oh, I don't mind," said Greville, "if you like. Your play, Leblanc!"

It was a wonder to him, knowing as he did that Erlacourt, although he did not care much for cards, was a skilful player, how he contrived to make no mistakes in making mistakes.

He himself had played into his friend's hands by that objection, but he did not relish winning over him.

Presently Venner muttered up.

"Done your game?" said Leblanc.

"Yes. How's yours going?"

"We shall have done soon," said Erlacourt, "it's the last deal."

Venner sat down near them, alternately attending to them and sipping a glass of wine. He could not see but that Erlacourt was in earnest over the game. His indifferent play could not then be due to carelessness.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Greville, as the cards were swept up, "you're lost, Erlacourt."

"Well then," said Erlacourt, with a touch of exasperation, "another game to retrieve the first."

Greville hesitated, really because he hated to win while the other lost. Erlacourt, not giving him time to speak, turned to Venner.

"Since Greville won't, will you?" he said.

"I am sure these gentlemen are not tired of winning. Or any other game—*vingt-et-un*—*écarté*—?"

"Baccarat," suggested Leblanc, who longed to pluck anew this foolish golden bird.

"No, no," said Venner, interposing, "not baccarat. I'll join you with pleasure, Mr. Erlacourt. Shall it be *vingt-et-un*?"

"If you like."

Greville and Venner changed seats, and the game began. Erlacourt's fortunes were fluctuating, and Greville watched less the game than one of the players with intense interest.

It needed skill to feign ignorance, and still greater skill to alternate his gains and losses with such perfect appearance of likelihood.

It was as if he were stirred up by his losses, and perhaps by his exhibition of inferiority. He even seemed vexed when he failed. Greville's excitement grew terribly; he had such quick sympathy with the man he loved more dearly in these last few days than ever he had done before.

The game became very close—for a while it seemed a toss-up who would sweep up the gains.

The two Frenchmen became highly excited. Venner was as cool as ice, conscious of his skill, and not of the temperament to be roused by any crisis.

Erlacourt, neither over excited, nor over cool, seemed to vary in mood—but betrayed a certain anxiety when the game went against



him; if, on the contrary, he made a point for himself, he was quietly satisfied.

Greville could not help watching him, conjecturing what it was all to lead to, disturbed at the cool Eriscourt seemed paying; and in the midst of these thoughts, in which he had somewhat lost himself, he started as Eriscourt suddenly pushed back his chair.

"What an unlucky beggar I am!" he said, half vexedly, half laughing. "Mr. Venner, you have fairly beaten me, and I must compliment you on your play. But you will give me a chance for revenge?"

"Certainly—with the greatest pleasure," said Venner. "When shall we say?"

"I can't quite say. I am not a member, you see, and Greville is engaged all this week."

Greville half opened his lips to say that one of the engagements could be put aside, when Eriscourt's eyes met him. There was scarcely a change in them, yet Greville understood, and immediately Venner said, urbanely,—

"But I should be very pleased to act as friendly member, any night you can spare, if you would not mind just calling at my chambers."

"Oh, thanks. You are very good. I will certainly call."

Venner handed him one of his cards with the question,—

"You are not going yet, are you?"

"No, but I shall not play any more. I think I have lost enough."

"Come and have a cigar in the smoking-room, then," said Venner. "Come, Greville, or do you play?"

Greville declined playing, and Eriscourt accepting the proposal, the three went off to the smoking-room—a comfortable apartment on the second floor.

The three men, ensconced in the easiest of easy-chairs, smoked for a few minutes in silence till Eriscourt began,—

"So you know the Danbys, Mr. Venner? They are very old friends of my brother's—"

"Your brother?" said Venner.

"I mean brother-in-law, but it's the same thing."

"Do you look on the relationship in that light? I've often thought it's a rather objectionable mode of regarding it."

"I don't think I get at your meaning—why?" said Eriscourt, looking at Venner with an intentness the long lashes veiled.

"Suppose the husband and wife are at daggers drawn—"

"As they very often are," put in the other. Venner laughed.

"So they are. Well, in that case the wife's relations might object to that brotherly sentiment."

"Or it might cut the other way," said Eriscourt. "I should imagine if a man got tired of his wife he would want to repudiate his brotherhood with her sisters."

"I don't see, if he did," said Greville, "how his diables of the fact would alter the fact."

"Is it a fact?" asked Venner.

"Don't for heaven's sake go into such a deep question to-night," said Eriscourt, lazily. "All I can say is I've been taught to consider it so, but it doesn't concern me. I am not burdened with a wife."

"Faith! nor I," said Venner, with a laugh, "nor don't intend to be."

"You're wise," said Eriscourt. "One gives up freedom when one marries."

"What heresy!" cried Greville, impulsively. "There is a bondage that is better than liberty."

"I should like to know where it is then," said Leigh. "Not in marriage; a man can't manage a woman, and the result is that the woman manages the man. From the moment that happens he can't say his soul is his own, unless he becomes a tyrant, and he can't quite do that. He can't oppress a woman."

Venner sat looking down, smoking away at his cigar, then he said, with a certain uneasiness, as if he must say something but were doubtful how his hearers would receive it,—

"Women are the deuce sometimes, though."

"Oh, you go in for the tyrant rôle then," said Eriscourt. "But that won't answer with some women."

"I don't see why not," said Venner, adding quickly, "of course I don't approve of it."

"Of course not," echoed Eriscourt. "That is a matter without doubt. If you don't see why not, though, my opinion may enlighten you. I should say a woman with any spirit would—" he leant his head back again, looking at Venner without seeming to do so—"leave the man who, being her husband, was also her tyrant."

"And a good riddance, too!" said Venner savagely.

Eriscourt began to laugh.

"My dear fellow," he said, "you say that with such good-will one would think you had been troubled with some deuce of a woman. But you are, like me, happily free."

"Well," said Venner, "if I did answer warmly it is because I have seen amongst friends the misery a woman can cause."

There are some people who intuitively detect falsehood. They feel it by some process not belonging to reason or any of the physical senses, and Eriscourt was one of these. Natural as was Venner's explanation, easy his manner, the painter had no belief in its truth. He accepted the explanation with an, "Ah, in that case you have an excuse," and Venner had no idea but that he had successfully retrieved his slight mistake.

Shortly after the two artists took their leave. Greville had but to glance in the other's face as the lights outside flashed on it to see that he was in reality anything but calm. But he asked no questions, and Eriscourt volunteered no information. The only allusion he made to the evening was,—

"Thanks, Greville; you have helped me."

"I am very glad," was the answer; "but I feel miserable about my winnings; it is positive cheating."

"Give them to a church, then," said the other. "I will not touch them."

Greville went to bed and to sleep. His conjectures, though anxious, were not of a nature to keep awake a young man in high health and considerably tired, but Eriscourt made no attempt at sleep, it had never been further from him.

He went to his studio, threw up the blinds, letting in the dawning morning light, and then sat down by a table, leaning his folded arms on it, and bowing his head down on them.

Heart and soul were in a tumult, so sorely tempted, so wildly questioning; just the step he had gained to-night had been another one.

Was he called upon to go further? What was it to him or Violet?

Let the man go; he had denied any rights, he had cast her off; well, then, forget him, forget the torture, and let them be happy.

Why should they be parted? Why should he be half mad to see her, to hear her voice, and be denied?

She was spotless, why try to prove her stained? It was man's law, unjust, implacable, that forbade them, not Heaven's. Love itself gave rights, love overshadowed the rights the bare law gave.

It seemed all so specious to a man blinded by his own passion, it opened up such a glowing vista for his eyes to dwell on, for his heart to rest in.

The world knew nothing; none could accuse her, and he never would. But the man was too noble, too pure-souled not to awake from that dream, not to see its falseness, not to be overwhelmed with remorse and humiliation until the overwrought physique gave way in heavy sobs.

When he lifted his face the sun was just throwing its faint gleams on the different objects in the room—the easel, the pictures on the walls, the flowers in the hearth.

Eriscourt looked round the familiar room, yet so strangely unfamiliar, as rooms we know

will look at dawn, then got up and fetched pencil and drawing-paper.

The anguish of the past hour had left him, if physically wearied, mentally strong and strangely quiet, the half-numbed feeling that follows deep emotion.

He began his sketch, and went on steadily, hearing but not noticing the sounds of life within and without the house.

A man's head grew under his hand, exquisitely drawn, every line and shadow correct, a vivid likeness, not a stiff representation, showing, as Kingsley has it, the perfection of portraiture, not what the man is as he sits before the artist, but what the man is in himself—his capacities, his possibilities.

It was a hard task, but he forced himself to it, finished it, and locked it away, then wrote a few lines to Violet Herbert, beginning abruptly without superscription, asking her to say when she could see him.

This note was given to the factotum manservant, with orders to take it at once, and wait for an answer.

Not very long afterwards the man came to his master, and delivered a note.

"When you like," wrote Violet. "I shall be at home all day. My time is free; it is for you to choose the hour."

Eriscourt kissed the letter a dozen times before he put it away. Of course, he did not destroy it.

To-day he should see her—to-day. The mere thought was like a song!

## CHAPTER XIX.

"What can he want with me?" thought Violet Herbert, not without a certain trembling fear.

She knew no light thing, no mere longing to see her, would make Eriscourt be the first to break through the rule she had laid down. He might suffer, but he would be silent to the end if she chose it. To say that she was not glad that it had been in some way necessary to transgress her wishes would not be true.

She had had many an hour of heartfelt yearning, of unbearable loneliness, blaming herself for needless care, for cruelty, and yet not daring to write to him "I cannot bear absence; come." No, she could not do that. But as the time drew near when he might come, she looked at her watch every second, and every second was an hour.

She was restless, walking from room to room, then finally betaking herself to her boudoir, where she could not sit still an instant, but walked to and fro continually. The excitement made her look her best to-day; it had flushed her cheek, and made the soft lips tremulous and the large eyes brilliant. She looked so young, too; the lines of pain seemed to have smoothed themselves away, the brow looked more serene.

When at last she heard the well-known step and his voice saying something to Lucie, she pressed her hands over her heart as if its beating suffocated her.

She could scarcely answer "yes" to his "May I come in?" and when he entered, went forward to him half blindly, as if irresistibly impelled.

Was it well, that decree of hers? Would there have been half the passionate joy each felt if this meeting had been only after a few days' or even a week's separation? Would every thought in each heart have been bent so absorbingly on the other through a shorter separation? Must it not be either one or the other, either entire parting, or meeting as they had done before?

Through all her half-bewildering rapture she could not help such questionings thronging on her mind. The very clasp that held her ever closer and closer made such misgivings more vivid. She understood that she had but intensified where she had meant to subdue.

Erlescourt loosed her at last, but not before he had held her off a little and looked at her with a keenness that brought the colour to her face. She knew how easy it was for him to read that she too had been weary and heart-sick.

"I am quite well," she said, trying to give a direction to his thoughts she was quite conscious they had not had. She tempted him to make the answer he had not otherwise uttered.

"You look very different from what you did the last time I saw you."

Her assumption of ease fell at once.

"Ah," she said, turning half aside, "don't reproach me. Perhaps I have been cruel only I did not mean to. If I suffered alone, but you have suffered, too! Perhaps I have not been wise."

"How easy it is to see," said Erlescourt, "that you have had but little love. You are always conscience-stricken, always magnifying mistakes into sins. I did not mean the slightest reproach by what I said. I was not thinking of myself at all but of you. I have obeyed you, and I will obey you again if you choose it."

He had drawn her within his arm again as he spoke, with the tenderness that manner and voice unconsciously took when speaking to her.

She could not quite bring herself to release him from that obedience in so many words. It was not easy for her to tell him that she herself had no strength to obey herself; but, following her impulse, she put one hand quickly on his, a touch light and soft as a child's, but what child's could ever have said so much?

Erlescourt took the hand in both his own.

"Do you know what trust you have shown me?" he said. "Ah, Violet, it is such women as you that make men a little nearer to the angels!"

He dropped her hand. Violet went and sat down by a small table, trembling a little. He walked up and down for a few minutes. The task he had viewed with such ineffable dread seemed harder than ever. How should he begin? How save her from a shock?

Turning at the end of the small room and coming again towards her, he caught her wistful look, and suddenly pausing by her chair, leant on it.

"Violet, you half guess why I have come?"

"Is it about Edgar Marsden?" she asked; she never said "my husband."

Her voice was very low, but perfectly steady. She had learnt self-control in a bitter school.

"You make my task easier, dearest. I want you to look at a sketch I have brought of a man I know as Gilbert Venner, and tell me if it is or is not Edgar Marsden."

Standing half behind her, he could not see her face; perhaps he did not want her to see his. He laid the sketch on the table beside her.

In dead silence, with hands pressed together, and breath drawn in long, heavy throbs, otherwise without movement, Violet looked on the face she had last seen on the darkest day of her life.

Not all the changes of seven years, not all the deeper changes of a life of unrestrained license, could deceive her. Perfect art had reached the recesses of the man's soul, and placed the man himself before her as he was when he had flung her dishonour in her face.

Erlescourt waited till the minutes seemed hours, till he had almost touched her or spoken; before he could do either, she had twisted herself round, looking up at him, a white face, a glow in the great wide eyes, a lip that quivered uncontrollably, an anguish, a passion, a fire that seemed to change her. Her very voice was altered, hard, hoarse, broken.

"Yes, it is he!" she said. "That is the man I trusted—man, do I say? Heaven sometimes lets devils be born into the world!"

Erlescourt quietly drew the sketch out of her sight; as he did so she turned herself away from him again, then flung her arms out

on the table before her, and the fair head went down.

Erlescourt only bent over her, laying tenderest touch on the soft curling hair; he knew she would bear nothing more.

He was quiet with the sort of tense quiet that we feel at such times, almost as if our own feeling were deadened, but in reality because it is absorbed, drawn into somebody else's need.

A long, shivering sigh, then Violet lifted her head.

"Leigh, you are not gone?" she said, half dazed.

"I am always here when you want me, my darling."

"I do want you."

He drew the bright head against him, smoothing back the wavy hair from her forehead, thinking sadly enough how strangely the positions of man and woman were changed, and he was so often the comforter as well as the upholder.

"It brought it all back!" she whispered. "If I could ever forget that day! I never shall, not if I live a thousand years. And yet it was the day I first saw you. Do you know how I love to recall that I owe my life to you? I think of it so often!"

"And I, too, and sometimes, Violet, I cannot believe that we were brought so strangely together to be parted at last."

She lifted herself suddenly, setting her teeth.

"I would rather that," she said, "than—than—oh, do not think that I love you less because I love honour more, and yet I love honour best, half because I love you. Now, there is always a cloud, always."

"Violet, would Heaven I could make it always sunshine for you!" said Erlescourt, brokenly.

"Come round here," said Violet, softly, then as he obeyed, "kneel down so—so that I can see your face."

He did as she told him; sweeter she had never seemed to him, deeper adoration he had never felt for her.

"You give me all the sunshine I can know," she said, "you have lifted me out of despair and self-contempt; you twice saved my life; you taught me that I was not utterly worthless; you gave me happiness in spite of all; you now are doing your utmost to lift the cloud from my life, even though it cost an immovable one on yours. Do you think I don't know what it costs you—"

"Violet—"

"Hush! Do you think I don't know what it costs you to meet this man, to spend hours over this picture of him?"

"What is all that when I love you? How can anything be too hard that is for you?"

Looking down into his face, instinct with the enthusiasm of a love that counts sacrifice as joy, she said,—

"I wonder how many women have had given to them a love like yours? I wonder what could ever repay it?"

"It merits—it wants none—but love."

"Well, you have that. Perhaps I ought not to say all this to you, but you have borne, you will bear, so much for me, and I cannot stay you, you will not yield!"

"Never! How could you love me if I did?"

"But, Leigh, do you know that the hardest part of the task you have set yourself is before you now? It is a sacrifice no woman could ever ask, or even expect. This man is your enemy because he is mine. You must seem to be his friend. I can see that must be your plan, because there is none other. You must be false, you so saintlessly true. You must incur the suspicion of your own friends—Marsden stamps the men who associates with him."

"Violet, why do you talk so? You are not doubting me, are you? You are not thinking that I shall falter because I must suffer? What is the love worth that shirks suffering? You do not think my love will grow cold, and

I shall ask impatiently why I am fool enough to work without hope of reward? I have counted all the cost. Can it be counted? Are you testing me?" said Erlescourt, looking almost perplexed.

"No. And if you have counted the cost, what does it stem to you?"

"Why, nothing!"

"If any one else had said that to me," said Violet, "I should not believe it. I should think it was a self-deception or a falsity. But you—your eyes are truth itself. No, I was not testing you, and I never doubted you. You would ask why I have put it all before you. You have had so bright a life that I was not sure you realised it all. It is not easy, unless one has suffered, to know all that suffering entails. One has to experience it."

"I know it partly already, Violet, and I have not flinched. I will own it to you"—he went on, hurriedly—"as you have divined—that it was agony to meet him, to have his face before me, nay, more, that it seemed a terrible injustice that all my boundless love could not outweigh his bare rights. I have passed through the fire! You will believe me—you will not think I deceive myself?"

"No," said Violet, gently. She hesitated, then bent forward, and for a second her lips touched his forehead. That soft, light, half timid kiss thrilled through him. Was not last night's anguish trebly repaid? "Now, tell me," Violet said, presently, when he had risen, "where you met—well, let us call him Venner."

"I met him first at the Danbys, you know who I mean. I did not recognise him at all from your description, as you will see from the sketch I scarcely could."

"He is so altered. What then made you think he was Marsden?"

"Violet, what curious link has that picture of mine with our lives? It was that that gave me the first vague idea about you, and that that made me suspect Venner's identity. I am glad now I was obliged to let the picture be exhibited."

Then he told her how he had come to be in the gallery, and how Venner had started at sight of "Forsaken," and afterwards questioned him about the model.

"I don't say I made up my mind, but it gave me a suspicion. I got Greville to take me to King's, which place Venner frequents."

"But, Leigh," said Violet, with dilating eyes and starting up, "you must not run such risk. I know what you have done. You have pretended to love play, to be ignorant of it, you have lost to Edgar—he always was a gambler—to let him think he has a hold on you. Oh, it is too much! Think of your reputation."

"I will risk that, dearest! but do you mean that my friends will think ill of me?"

"I did mean that partly, and besides, clubs, such as King's, get noticed by the police. Sooner or later they make raids on them. Think, if your name got mixed up with such a scandal!"

"It all comes back to the old thing," said Erlescourt, "it is for you, and that ends the matter!"

"But you will be careful? I wish I could move you," she said, in deep distress. "I know him so well. If you make the slightest slip, if once he suspects, he will be unscrupulous, and he will not fight in the open field, that was never his way. But it is useless to say much—"

"And only pains me. I cannot bear to refuse you, and yet I must. I must succeed, I will succeed. I mean to get a hold over him, it is not so difficult. He is the sort of man who does not always play fair; and at times, so I hear, he is not over careful as to wine. You are white, dear one, and still reluctant. I will not be reckless, I vow to you. I will keep a curb on myself. This little hand of yours," taking in both his the hand she put in entreaty on his arm, "those soft eyes of yours, asking so much, are powers I could not gainsay if I would. You are never more in my heart than when I am fighting for you. Are you satisfied?"



"On that point, yes. On others, I must be, and 'musts' are generally hard."

But she acknowledged to herself that it would have been harder still if he had yielded. She could not then, as she did now when he had left her, think of him with a heart full to overflowing of tender pride. Come what might, he would never cause her that keenest of sorrows—disappointment.

## CHAPTER XX.

THAT sometime peaceable and sedate household in Hamilton terrace had of late become much disturbed—not in any indecorous fashion. It was as regular, as well ordered, as exasperating a model as ever; but there was a certain atmosphere which was felt by all, from master to kitchen-maid.

It was like a circular storm, a small area of turmoil, outside that area the serene calm. It was difficult to say where the centre of the storm lay; whether in the preoccupation of the mistress or the irritability of Dora—for she had become decidedly irritable, not to say at times snippy, and generally so towards her cousin Emily.

Whatever the head of the house thought he kept to himself. He was excessively busy, and constantly had to work in the evening in his private room, and not sorry for the necessity either.

His wants, not exacting, were cared for as assiduously as usual, he had nothing to complain of but the atmosphere.

One night, after reading part of a heavy brief in his study, he went up to his room, somewhat past eleven, expecting to find his wife's dressing-room empty, but to his surprise the light streamed brilliantly from the partly opened door.

For Emily to forget to turn the gas down would have been so extraordinary a proceeding that it never entered her husband's head. He fell back on the less extraordinary proceeding of her not yet having gone to bed. He opened the door further and went in. There sat Emily before the toilet table; she was not yet undressed, and was evidently in a brown study.

"Emily," said Challoner, surprised, "are you not well?"

"Come in, Arthur. Yes, I am quite well. Have you finished your brief?"

"Not quite, but as I was getting muddled I thought it better to get some rest and finish work at chambers. What has kept you up, my dear?"

"I was thinking."

"I see that. Don't you think sleeping is better?"

"It is not very late, and there is so much to worry one that I did not feel at all inclined for sleep."

"Your boy again, of course," said Challoner good-naturedly, settling himself in an arm-chair. "I've seen for some time that you were not in your usual spirits, and as to Dora, there's something the matter with her temper, but I haven't liked to say anything. Things often right themselves if they're let alone. I hope you have no fault to find with Dora?"

"Oh, she has not so much to do with it all," said Emily.

"It all," sounded vague to the lawyer, used to precise definitions; "the said Dora is not the chief cause of the said worry," would have been more in his line, but years of married life had taught many things, and one was to wait.

"I can't make out Leigh at all," said Emily, with tears in her eyes. "What do you think I hear now?"

"I can't imagine at all," was the grave answer. "Where do you find out so much, Emmie?"

"Naturally, since we know so many people he knows. And there are the young Danbys constantly down in the West-end. I daresay just where they ought not to be."

"Then they certainly wouldn't see Leigh," said Challoner, still more gravely than before.

"Oh, I don't know that," said Emily, with a movement of the head that had she been the cook would have developed into a toss. "Of course you have heard of King's Club in — street?"

"I believe I heard of it quite a year ago. It is a club started by a Mr. George King and devoted to the requirements of gentlemen who like very high play," said Challoner.

"Did you know," demanded Emily, "that Leigh went there?"

"I did; but I am not his keeper!"

"You knew it," she said, turning on her quiet husband so fiercely that a timid man might have been startled.

Challoner was only very quiet, but he had never been over-awed by his wife.

"My dear," said he, "this is a domestic comedy, not a tragedy. Leigh has never taken amies any advice I have given him. I shouldn't like to say whether he always followed it, that's quite another thing; but I don't see that his present delinquency calls for interference."

"I am surprised at you, Arthur. Do you want my brother to become a gambler?"

"Certainly not; but I don't think he will."

"You can't approve of his going to a club like that. He has his own club, the Travellers; if he wants cards or billiards why doesn't he go there, where he meets gentlemen, and the play is conducted in a proper manner? But this place—where they positively gamble and all sorts of people meet!"

"Where have you become so learned, Emily?" said her husband, amusedly.

"Tom Danby told me a good deal. He goes to King's himself, I am sorry to say. I pointed out to him how wrong and ungentlemanly it was, and the danger of becoming a gambler."

"Never mind Tom Danby, he has a father and mother who are responsible for his morals."

"And what mother has my boy known but me?" said Emily, tearfully. "But they are all alike; we toil, and think, and pray for them, and they go their own way, and if we try a word of remonstrance they keep away."

The amount of general truth in this, and her distress, prevented Challoner from making any reply that might hurt her feelings. Emily assiduously dried her eyes with her handkerchief while her husband said soothingly,—

"Don't cry, my dear. I don't think Leigh deserves such a condemnation. If you knew the frightful trouble some young fellows are! After all, he has never given you a real heart-ache. Forgive me for saying it, but you do exaggerate anything he does. What is his offence now? Going occasionally—"

"Occasionally! He is often there!"

"I should like to know the authority for that. We will say he goes, without specifying the exact number of times. It doesn't follow because he plays that he plays high. He is not at all likely to take to gambling. It isn't a temptation to him, and besides, he is too busy."

"Evil companionship will lead to anything. You can't say, Arthur, that you approve of a young man going to these dreadful clubs."

"No, I don't; but also I don't approve of pulling them up sharp."

"It is not likely, if I wished it, that I should be able to do that," said Emily. "Leigh has quite given up making this house a second home. He cannot bear a word to be said to him, not even from me!"

"Are you sure that is entirely his fault?" asked Challoner. Fond as he was of his wife he did not at all wonder that Leigh did not appreciate her counsels and admonitions.

"Do you mean it is mine?" asked Emily, indignantly.

"If you want my opinion, yes. I have seen Leigh take things from you as many young men would not. A temper like that can't be difficult to manage, but if you will not resent

my sayings, I don't think you do manage him. Perhaps you don't understand him, or he doesn't understand you. At any rate, you hear him too much, and all the affection and gratitude in the world won't make a proud spirit bear coercion. You say you have been a mother to him, so you have, as far as any one else can fill that place. But you are not his mother, and it is impossible he should submit to you as he might to his mother."

"How can I let him go to his ruin without saying a word?"

"It is not the word I object to, but how the word is said. And Leigh never was near going to ruin. What a strong expression!"

"Not when he gets into the toils of a designing woman! Not when he takes to gambling because of her!" exclaimed Emily. "It is all through her that he is giving me up. I wonder if he thinks he is breaking my heart!" and she sobbed unrestrainedly.

(To be continued.)

## THE CURSE OF THE LESTERS.

—O—

### CHAPTER XXXI.

It may seem strange, but Basil Lester had no idea of the changes that had taken place in the fortunes of his sometime betrothed. He heard pretty frequently from Vale Lester, but no one ever mentioned to him the fact that David Devenish was dead and his *fiancée* had disappeared mysteriously.

Mr. and Mrs. Tempest were Scotch, and had a great deal of shrewd caution hidden in their breasts. Vana, if she could be found, would be a great lady, the mistress of a beautiful country house, and the owner of five thousand a year. She would be able to do a great deal for them, and so the pair resolved that there should be no nine days' wonder about her disappearance.

They did not even give out her heiress-ship, but quietly announced that she was "detained in Yorkshire." Vale Lester was not an inquisitive place; the village accepted the statement, and speedily forgot all about Vana in the absorbing interest they felt in the attempt to poison Miss Lester.

It really seemed as though the Vicar's gentle niece was as completely forgotten as though she had never come to Norfolk. The Tempest children missed her sorely, and there was a burden of reproach ever tugging at their mother's heart, but no one ever mentioned Vana. Neither the Vicar nor his wife had forbidden her name to be spoken, but certainly they did not encourage their children to talk of her, and so to all seeming and appearance she was forgotten.

Basil never made any inquiry respecting her. He knew her wedding was to have been in January, and as the first month of the year slipped by, he grew a little sterner, a little graver, as he thought of her another man's wife. He never forgot her; he could not, try as he would, but he never mentioned her name in his home letters, and so as Lady Lester was far too engrossed in her own troubles to mention any one else of her own accord, he never heard even what all the world of Norfolk knew, that Mr. Devenish had died, and Vana was "detained in Yorkshire."

Poor Basil! Even without the pain of having lost the one woman he loved and being engaged to another he had plenty to trouble him. His mother's letters and Fenella's vehement accusations forced him into declining further assistance from his uncle; then Lady Lester having, she said, taken this step "by his advice," did not scruple to apply to him in any difficulty, and the claims on his purse were so many and constant that the poor young fellow had much ado to keep out of debt.

Not that Lady Lester was a cruel selfish woman or a heartless mother, but it is difficult for a lady of middle age to find her income suddenly reduced to one quarter of its amount

and yet to make both ends meet. Then my lady was essentially a weak character and much led by her girls.

Now these "girls," who had never joined in the prejudice against Uncle Percy, thought that if Basil insisted on their resigning tangible benefits they had a right to his purse in recompense. By the time Fenella and Miss Deborah settled at Arden, and neglected the family at the Court, his sisters were in open revolt against their eldest, nay, their only, brother.

It seemed to these young ladies that Basil was answerable for Fenella's rudeness. She was engaged to him, therefore he must be in constant correspondence with her. Why could he not represent to her how much his mother and sisters needed a change? Every one knew Aunt Deborah refused Fenella nothing. Then, too, Miss Devreux would have forty thousand pounds, and goodness knew how much more on her wedding day.

Why did not the betrothed pair hurry on the marriage, then Sir Basil could live on his wife's fortune and present the whole of his present income to his family?

Of course there was a great deal of injustice in all this, but Basil's sisters had one real ground of complaint. They had far more real claim on their Aunt Deborah than Fenella. For Basil to marry Fenella and live upon her income could hardly be called fortune hunting, since in point of fact he had far more right to the money than his fiancée.

Poor Basil!

On the one hand, his mother and sisters wrote continually beseeching him to make (their own expression) Fenella and his aunt come home to Vale Lester; on the other, Fenella sent him accounts of how delighted they were with Arden, and how their spirits seemed to rise by magic the moment they were clear of the cottage at Vale Lester and its gruesome associations.

His wedding was fixed for June, and he looked forward to it with a kind of sullen indifference. It was to be; no doubt Fenella was a most suitable bride, and he should try to make her happy, but he had not the slightest exultation or content at the idea of winning the lovely creature whom many men would have envied him.

The poor fellow had yet another dilemma. To be married even in the quietest manner requires money; and still more when a baronet is united to a beautiful heiress is ready cash indispensable. It was very well to argue he could live on the interest of Fenella's fortune, but that could hardly be touched at once, and meanwhile expenses would crop up. A hundred and twenty-five pounds a quarter sounds plenty for a single man, but Lady Lester's appeals had been so numerous that Basil had very little of his income for his own use.

He could not propose a speedier marriage than June for this reason; he could not take a three days' holiday and run over to Arden for the same cause. In those early months of the new year Sir Basil had to abstain from most things that needed ready money.

He heard of his Aunt Jepson's death with kindly pity. He knew quite well what a toil-laden life hers had been, and he was sorry he could not offer the slightest help in the strain the funeral expenses would be to his cousins. Her death reminded him of another fact: Aunt Deborah and Percy were now the last of the old generation.

If his uncle had not been instrumental in the attack on Miss Deborah's life, if he had had no hand in Sir George's death, it seemed terrible he should pass his whole life catatonic by his relations for the mere suspicion. Basil remembered the simple kindness with which Percy had met him in December, the real sorrow he had shown at his father's funeral. He recalled Edith Lester's intense faith in her husband, and for the first time he faltered in the suspicion Fenella had so carefully instilled.

"It seems impossible," he thought, and this view of the case struck him for the first time, "that a man possessed of ample means should stain his soul with murder for the sake of touching a fortune he could not enjoy for more than twelve years."

Perhaps the thought of Percy Lester was prominent with him that night, because in the letter announcing her mother's death the eldest of the Jepson girls—married now to a curate of high character and small means—had told him of the kindness shown by her uncle and aunt all through her mother's illness. Mary Lawson had ventured to tell him the shadow on her husband's name was killing her Aunt Edith, and she begged him, as head of the family, to try and shake Miss Deborah's extraordinary fancy.

Sir Basil was at tea. He kept simple habits in Ireland, and the evening meal, served at seven, was a combination of dinner, tea and supper, which saved trouble and expense.

He was reading Mary Lawson's letter for perhaps the third time, when there came a loud ring at the door, and his own servant, Andrew Judkins—nephew to the old butler—who had waited on him from boyhood, came in with a bewildered face.

"Please, Sir Basil, here's Miss Devreux."

Basil had no time for reply. Almost before Andrew had finished speaking Fenella was in the room. She was more beautiful than he had ever seen her, but there was a look of terrible excitement in her eyes.

"My dear girl!" exclaimed Basil in utter amazement, "where have you come from? What have you done with Aunt Deborah, and what brings you here?"

He spoke in all good faith without the least idea of the terrible meaning his words might have for her. A dull, red streak rose on her face as he mentioned his aunt, and then fading left her paler than before.

"I think you might say you are glad to see me!"

"Of course I am glad, Fenella, but you must make a little allowance for my nerves. This is a very quiet, monotonous place, and one isn't used to such surprises as you have given me."

Andrew had calmly laid the table for the unexpected guest. As he disappeared Fenella drew up her chair to the table and took off her cloak. She seemed to see not the slightest impropriety in eating *à-la-carte* with a bachelor in his own house.

She ate very little, but passed her cup twice to be replenished; she seemed almost feverish with thirst. Basil felt convinced something was wrong, but, humouring her mood, he asked no questions until she had finished her meal, when he took her into his own study.

"Now, Fenella, I want you to tell me what has brought you to Ireland."

"I wanted to see you."

"I wish you had written first," he said, gravely. "Don't you see, Fenella, you can't stay alone here. I must take you back to my aunt to-night. Where is she? At Ashton?" naming the nearest town, some six miles off.

"She is in London!"

"Fenella!"

"Don't look at me like that!" pouted Fenella. "Aunt Deborah is very angry with me, Basil. She has turned me out of doors, and I—I had no where in the world to go to, and so I came to you. I thought you would be true to me."

Basil pressed her hand kindly.

"True to you now and always, Fenella; but, dear, don't you see yourself I can't keep you here? I must send you away until you are my wife."

Fenella looked at him anxiously; there was a feverish brightness in her eyes.

"Couldn't we be married now, Basil? I shouldn't want a grand wedding; we needn't have bridesmaids or fine clothes. I only want to be your wife."

The strangest fear smote Sir Basil as he looked at her. Could she be threatened with brain fever? Fenella was the last girl in the world to care nothing for pomp and ceremony, and till now he had believed his aunt so wrapped up in her that her will was Miss Deborah's law.

"My dear," he said, slowly, speaking with grave tenderness, "you know that you belong to me, and I will fight your battles against all the world. We will be married as soon as it can be arranged. I don't know anything of the law

about such things in Ireland, but I should think our wedding could be in two or three days."

"Couldn't it be to-night?" pleaded Fenella, feverishly. "Basil, if you delay it will be too late. That man is coming after me very fast. I can see him hurrying on, and he will part us, I know it, I feel it!"

Sir Basil was quite convinced then her brain was breaking down.

"There is a friend of mine, Fenella, who lives three miles off. I am sure his mother will make you welcome until I can get a license and other things. Their house is quite shut in by trees, and no one could find you there. You will be quite safe until I can marry you."

"And you will promise me not to go away? You won't rush off to England and leave me?" pleaded Fenella.

"I have no thought of going away, Fenella. Can't you trust me?"

She smiled at him then, a smile more full of tenderness than any one had ever seen on her face.

"I can trust you always."

The dog-cart came round, and Sir Basil drove his fiancée over to Willow Lawn, the home of Robert Armitage, a surgeon of no mean skill, although fate had cast his lines in an Irish country village.

Basil had a real esteem and friendship for Mr. Armitage. He knew the kind old lady who presided over her son's comfort would welcome Fenella, and though he did not mention his friend's profession to her, it was a comfort to him to feel she would be under the eye of a medical man.

The Armitages were true gentlefolks. They must have been amazed at the arrival of Sir Basil and a strange young lady at nine o'clock on a March night; but they showed no surprise, and greeted their visitors as though they had been expected guests.

Basil Lester was a truth speaker, but he was forced to colour the narrative he told Mrs. Armitage, and a glance at Fenella forbade her contradicting his story.

The Irish lady gathered that one of his sisters had been expected at Kilmorna, when, of course, Fenella would have been her guest. Mrs. Armitage promised to take all care of the young fiancée, and, indeed, was much taken with her dazzling beauty.

Basil had sent the dog-cart back, and begged Mr. Armitage to walk part of the way home with him.

As soon as they were out of the gate of Willow Lawn he told his story, adding to Fenella's explanation of her sudden arrival his own conviction that his aunt was too devoted to her to have really behaved as described.

"Of course I shall marry her at once, but I have no idea of the formalities required in Ireland. I want you to coach me up in them."

Robert Armitage laid one hand on his friend's arm.

"You can't marry her!"

"Why not?" very haughty, was Sir Basil's tone. "She was engaged to me when she thought herself my aunt's heiress. You don't suppose I would forsake her now?"

"I believe you are a model of constancy; but I never yet heard of a marriage where the bride was suffering from brain fever. Take my word for it, Sir Basil, before you could get a license Miss Devreux will be in raving delirium!"

"But—"

"My dear fellow," said Armitage, almost affectionately, "don't be horrified; heaps of people have brain fever and get over it. There is no more disgrace in brain fever than in a broken leg. Miss Devreux has suffered some terrible shock to her nervous system. Why, you told me yourself there had been an attempt to poison your aunt. That was quite enough to upset a nervous girl. Any way, you can't marry her until she recovers, and I should advise you in the meantime to send word of hersafely to her relations. They must be in a frenzy about her."

"She has no relations. My aunt adopted her. Armitage, you have taken a weight off my mind by saying it is brain fever. When that poor child talked of my aunt turning her out of doors



and declared that a man was pursuing her to part us, I felt horribly perplexed."

"It's brain fever," said the surgeon, decidedly. "My mother is a famous nurse, and we'll have the young lady well in no time."

"But I could not think of imposing such a charge on Mrs. Armitage."

"Mother won't mind, and where else could you send her? Sir Basil, leave Miss Devreux at Willow Lawn and we'll do our best."

Poor Basil! He opened his correspondence with misgivings the next day, but there was no letter which even mentioned Fenella's name.

The kind-hearted surgeon found time to ride over with the news that Fenella was in wild delirium. There was no doubt of her malady.

Mrs. Armitage had once installed herself as head nurse. The patient should have the utmost care; but the doctor and his mother alike urged Sir Basil not to see her.

"The poor girl's mind runs perpetually on your father's murder," said Bob, gravely. "It would harrow up your feelings to listen to her, and not do her the least good. You trust her to us, and we'll do our best."

Basil was sitting at tea the self-same hour at which Fenella had appeared on the night before, when once again he was disturbed by an arrival.

He had not written to his Aunt Deborah. Once, twice, he had attempted the task, but could not finish it. It seemed to him simpler to wait till news of Fenella's loss came from England.

The sound of Andrew ushering in a visitor did not surprise him *this* time, for he believed Miss Deborah capable of sending a dozen people after her darling; but he *did* wonder when the sounds died away, and he heard nothing of the visitor.

Andrew cleared away with a very solemn face, and when he was about to retire, he said, with rather a constrained manner,—

"My uncle's come, please sir!"

"Your uncle?"

"That used to be butler at The Court, Sir Basil. He and aunt are in Miss Deborah's service now. He wants to see you, please sir!"

"Show him in!"

Old Judkins looked so utterly weary and downhearted that Basil made him take a chair by the fire and drink a glass of wine before he even tried to speak.

"Now, old friend, what is it? I think I can guess, though! Aunt Deborah has sent you here to see if Miss Devreux is here. She came last night, and is staying with a friend of mine, but she is too ill to go home. I was just going to write to tell my aunt she has brain fever."

"And you're not married to her? Oh, Sir Basil, I've known you from childhood; don't be offended with me. Only say you're not married!"

"Certainly. I am not married, Judkins; but my aunt must be aware—"

"Oh, sir!" interrupted Judkins, "don't go to say a word against Miss Deborah, which may be asaint in Heaven. I've travelled night and day since yesterday morning early, when Jane Watson sent round for me, and my head swims so I can't speak clear; but Dr. Stone'll be here and Mr. Percy, too, in another day, and you'll believe them if you don't see an old servant!"

"Look here, Judkins, you served my father faithfully till his death, and I should never doubt your good intentions. Try and tell me why you have come to Ireland, and who sent you."

"You promise you'll not be angry?"

"Yes!"

"Mr. Percy was telegraphed to by the police yesterday to go and identify some one at Holyhead. He's been that ill lately, poor gentleman, Jane Watson thought he'd better not go alone, and she sent for me. We all thought, you see, sir, the person we had to identify was the woman Sharpe."

"And wasn't it?"

"It was Dr. Stone!"

"Dr. Stone!"

Judkins told all that had happened at Holyhead. The poor old doctor had been unable to speak to them; but from the fact he had last been seen on his way to Arden to insist on an interview with Deborah Lester, and that he was found travelling towards Ireland, Percy's idea was he

had discovered important news he was taking to Sir Basil as head of the family.

The strange attack on the old man by his fellow traveller, the correspondence between her description and that of Fenella had forced the impression that Miss Devreux was hurrying to Roscommon, meaning to be married before Dr. Stone could arrive with his warning.

"Sir Basil," said Judkins, humbly, "you may think me a scoundrel to speak against the young lady that's to be your wife; but all we ask, sir, is that you'll wait till you've seen Dr. Stone. A day or two can't matter much to you!"

Basil Lester looked very, very grave.

"I could not be married, if I wished it, before some days, for Miss Devreux is too ill. She came here last night evidently suffering from brain fever, and this morning she was perfectly delirious. People often do strange things with that complaint, and Dr. Stone, as a physician, will know her illness explains anything that has puzzled him in her behaviour."

"And, sir," the old servant hesitated, "you'll not refuse to see your uncle? It's my belief, sir, that if something isn't done soon to find the real murderer of Sir George, Mr. Percy 'll just sink into his grave with worry."

"You used not to be fond of him, Judkins!"

"I've seen a lot of him lately, sir, and of his lady, too, and if Sir George's murderer isn't found till doomsday I shall never suspect Mr. Percy!"

## CHAPTER XXXII.

FACE to face sat Dr. Stone and Sir Basil Lester. The young Baronet listened with horror to the old doctor's story of his visit to Arden, and his firm conviction that the "lady" known at the cottage as Miss Lester was an impostor. Bit by bit he went over the chain of evidence, and his own theory that Sir Basil's aunt had died in London.

Basil tried hard to defend the girl who had so nearly become his wife; but Robert Armitage, who joined the convalescent, confessed that Fenella's ravings all went to confirm the doctor's statement, and that from the marks still visible on her arms and other parts of her body she must have been using morphia as an injection for months.

It was his opinion she had some terrible secret on her conscience, and that even in delirium it haunted her.

Percy Lester could not stay in Ireland on his wife's account; but his brief visit to Roscommon had restored perfect sympathy between him and Basil.

The young man asked his uncle's pardon very humbly for the wrong he had done him in his thoughts, and confessed the prejudice had been instilled by Fenella.

It was Percy's idea that an advertisement should be inserted in the papers, begging:

"Mrs. Smith, who lately, with her daughter, spent two months at Arden under another name, should communicate with the undersigned, when she should bear of something to her advantage."

The name Smith was a lucky hit of Dr. Stone, who guessed that as the *maid* had been called Mary Smith, the homely cognomen was the real title of the stout old lady who had passed as Deborah Lester.

The advertisement was answered at once, in a very cautious, ill-spelt letter.

"Mrs. Smith would have nothing to do with Mr. Percy Lester unless he promised no harm should come to her."

Percy replied by the offer of fifty pounds, when both Mary and her mother called and confessed the cruel fraud. In one thing Fenella had been forgetful: though she had so strenuously imposed another woman on the world as Deborah Lester she had had her kind old patroness described in the register by her true name, and on her lonely grave in Highgate Cemetery she had raised a stone with the initials D. L.

Mary Smith confessed her mother had always been against the plan, but she had persuaded her to yield on account of gain. They left Miss Fenella at last because they were frightened.

She could not sleep at nights, and used to walk

about the house raving about poison and a woman called Sharpe.

She never told them anything exactly, but listening to her they felt sure she and this woman Sharpe were one.

She made such a beautiful old lady, when she spoiled her figure and put on a white wig. Then some one told them a woman called Sharpe had murdered a gentleman down at Vale Lester, and they grew frightened.

"I begin to understand all that has puzzled me," said Percy Lester to Dr. Stone that night. "Doctor, I shall have to bear the suspicion to the end, for if it be as I think, I could not bring such misery on Basil as publishing the truth would do."

But this was spared him.

One evening, late in May, when Fenella's illness had lasted two months, Basil Lester was allowed to see her. The fever had left her now, but she was strangely weak and languid. Mr. Armitage had broken the truth to Sir Basil; they must not wish for her to recover. A return of bodily strength meant permanent insanity. She would never be his wife. She was not his choice, but she had loved him—or Basil thought so—better than any one else in the world had done. He knew the terrible fraud she had conceived, and in part carried out, but he forgave her that. As yet he did not know the other dark secrets of her life.

"Basil?"

"Fenella!"

He sat by the couch with her hand in his. Very lovely she looked on this fair spring evening, with a beauty almost unearthly in its radiance, but through it all there was a shadow on her brow.

"Is it true?" she whispered. "Basil, I can trust you. Tell me, am I dying?"

"We fear so."

Just that. Not a word of doubt or pity, but oh, the tenderness of the man's voice.

"I don't want to die," said Fenella, fretfully. "I am so young, Basil, and we were to have been married next month."

Sir Basil knew not what to say. How could he regret her failing health when he knew the doom the future held for her, and yet, as she said, she was young to go.

"Are you quite sure, Basil?"

"Yes, dear."

"Then," said the girl, raising herself on her pillows, and looking straight into his face, "I have something to say to you. You never loved me, Basil, as I did you, but I think you are sorry for me now."

"I am more than sorry, Fenella."

Then you won't refuse what I am going to ask you. I want you to promise me something before I die."

"I will do anything in the world for you, Fenella. What is it?"

"I want you to promise to forgive me. I have something to tell you, but you must promise first. I don't think I could rest in my grave, Basil, unless you do."

"You need not tell me, dear," thinking she alluded to the fraud about Miss Deborah's death. "I can guess it."

"I would rather tell you—but you must promise first, say, 'I forgive you, Fenella, whatever you have done.'"

She was dying and she loved him. She had planned to wrong his family cruelly, but the fraud had only lasted two months. Basil could not refuse her, and he promised.

"Remember," and she looked at him, triumphantly, "you have promised; you can't be angry now. I parted you from Vana Temple!"

"Fenella!"

"I went to the post-office and got your letters; then, when she was heart-broken at your silence, and you were angry at her coldness (how could she write to you when she had no address), I managed it. I told her you were engaged to me, and showed her the picture you had left for me to give her. She might have doubted my word, she could not doubt your handwriting. To my own darling, on a picture in my possession. I gave her the address then, for I guessed she

would write and break with you, and by the same post I sent you back your letters—those letters she had never seen!"

"Fenella, it was cruel!"

"I loved you," said Fenella, "and Vana was only a child! She could not care for you as I did, and she soon consoled herself."

"They said he was a good man," said Basil, thoughtfully: "pray Heaven he makes her happy."

"He can't," said Fenella, bluntly. "The grand match fell through. The bridegroom died. Some one else would tell you if I did not. You will marry her and forget me."

"Fenella," he said gently, crushing back the horror he felt, and thinking of her as she lay there, panting, gasping, "you must not excite yourself. It is very bad for you."

"What does it matter since I'm dying, and you haven't heard all? I wrote it out once. You'll find it in my desk at the Cottage. I was Mrs. Sharpe! I killed Sir George!"

She fell back—dead! No reproach, no blame, no condemnation could reach her now. Her spirit had returned, sin-laden and soiled, to the Heaven that gave it.

Fenella died in May; the June roses bloomed when they laid her to rest in the Irish cemetery. Basil got leave of absence and went to England to see what he could do towards erasing the stigma from his uncle's name, and yet screening, as far as was possible, the memory of the woman who was to have been his wife.

In the desk, just as she had said, lay Fenella's confession, and with it a small packet sealed with red wax, which on being opened proved to be Deborah Lester's Will.

The old maid had always declared she should never make a will. Perhaps, with her usual eccentricity, this was to prevent people's raising their expectations. The document, which bore date six months after her brother Simon's death, and years before she adopted Fenella, left all she had in trust for her nephew, Basil O'Brian Lester, to come into his possession at his majority, and to descend to his heirs after him.

There was a consultation between Sir Basil and the nearest magistrate, and he assured the young baronet the living must be considered before the dead. Nothing would really clear Percy Lester from the suspicion so carefully thrown upon him but the publication of Fenella's confession, and so, a few weeks after her death, the full explanation of the Vale Lester tragedy was in every newspaper in the kingdom.

By this time the exigencies of his private circumstances, and the large fortune with which he had come by his aunt's will, had caused Sir Basil to beg Lord Kilmorna to release him from his engagement. The young peer generously consented, and on Sir Basil's recommendation appointed the young baronet's brother-in-law to the vacant post, so one of Lady Lester's girls had the chance of a fair competency.

The first use Basil made of the great wealth left him by his aunt was to settle his mother and sisters in a pleasant house at Richmond. He meant to allow them a thousand a year, and to act in all things for their benefit; but he could not bear their continual companionship, for none of these ladies possessed much tact, and therefore they could not see that of all subjects that of Fenella was most painful to him.

He was in London staying with his uncle Percy at the time that Fenella's confession was published, and he was astonished the very day the truth was given to the world to receive a visit from Lord Redmond, once Sir Lovel Delamere.

As a relation of Edith Lester—Lord Redmond was no stranger at the house, but this was the first time he and Sir Basil had ever met. "I wanted to tell you," said the young Earl simply, "that no shadow of reproach must ever trouble you regarding the poor girl who was your betrothed. Never think that had things gone differently her fate would have been brighter. She was doomed from the hour of her birth. I have only lately discovered from my father's papers why he forbid me to hold any intercourse with his sister, Mrs. Devreux, or her child. His step-mother had died raving mad. Her daughter,

Fenella's mother, was mad at the time of her baby's birth."

The two young men shook hands. Basil could appreciate the kindness which had prompted the visit.

"You must not think," he said gravely, "that your cousin's loss is the terrible blow to me it would seem. I proposed to her to please my relations when her treachery, (unknown to me), had parted me from the one creature I loved. On her deathbed, last May, she confessed to me my Vana was pure and true. Lord Redmond, I confess I found it hard to forgive your cousin. I have spent my life since in one long search for my lost love. I think I shall never really pardon Fenella's treachery until I see Vana Tempest face to face and hear her speak my pardon."

"What would you say if I could take you to her?"

"You!"

"She is staying with my aunt, the Dowager Lady Redmond, in Ireland. I am engaged to Miss Redmond, and the Countess has solemnly interdicted my visits until September; but I do not see why the prohibition need extend to you."

It was even so; the day she knew that Nora's happiness was secured Vana had written to the widowed Lady Redmond. The result was an invitation to join her and Nora at her brother's place near Dublin.

There Basil followed them. How he explained his seeming fickleness to Vana, how she told him her heart had never wavered from his keeping, those who have loved will understand. There was a double wedding at Christmastide, and though the young Earl of Redmond married one who was not his heart's first choice, there is little doubt he will do his utmost to secure Nora's happiness, though their love, unlike that of Basil and his Vana, has not been purified in the fire of suffering.

Percy Lester, at his own request, gave his bride to Sir Basil, and before the marriage ceremony he told his nephew the history of his youth, and how Vana was indeed his lawful child. Basil refused to have her recognised as such. He was perfectly content to wed his darling as the Vicar of Vale Lester's niece, and he would rather Vana should have come to him nameless than add another pang to the load Edith Lester had borne so long.

Edith knows the truth, but it has never travelled beyond the four persons most concerned.

The Dowager Lady Lester and her girls could never understand Uncle Percy's devotion to Vana, but they quite agree that his having nominated her his heir to the great fortune is the best thing that could have happened, for now whatever chance arises, the vast inheritance must come to Basil, either through his wife or as his own, if Percy does not pass seventy-five, the age at which Sir George died.

Basil purchased the presentation to a Devonshire living, and bestowed it on the Rev. James; perhaps he felt his wife would be happier if Aunt Hephaibah were not living at her very gates.

The Lesters are a rarely happy couple, with ample means for the present and vast wealth in the future. People have been heard to call them "lucky;" these little know the bitter suffering, the cruel doubts, they have endured.

The young Earl of Redmond and his wife, the kindly dowager, old Dr. Stone, and a young medical man from Ireland, are all welcome visitors at the Court.

Edith Lester did not linger long after Vana's wedding, and then Percy, at his nephew's request, gladly consented to share his home.

No one ever guesses the tie between the old man and Vana, though they say their mutual affection is beautiful.

There are little children now in the Vale Lester nursery, and one of them is called David. This boy will some day be master of the Court; he has an elder brother, George, looked up to with almost feudal veneration by the villagers, for this child must, they know, some day inherit the vast fortune bequeathed by his great uncle Simon, in the famous will which for so many years was spoken of, even by the family themselves, as "THE CURSE OF THE LESTERS."

[THE END.]

## FOUND WANTING.

—O:—

"WELL, Laura, what have you decided? Surely by this you have had time to make up your mind?"

The speaker was a well-dressed, middle-aged man—a stock broker, residing in Wareton. The person he addressed was his niece, Laura, a lovely young girl of seventeen.

She was, indeed, a beautiful creature, with her blue eyes, clear complexion, and light chestnut curls falling in showers down her shoulders, and reaching far below the waist. Her form was unrivalled in its elegant proportions, while the step was like that of a queen.

"Yes, uncle," she answered, pale but firm "I have decided."

"And your decision is—"

"In favour of Guy Sartoris."

"What! the beggarly young salt, who smells so strongly of bilge-water! Fugh! surely you do not mean it?"

"Uncle, I will not hear him insulted. He is noble, though poor, and some of these days you will acknowledge it."

"Listen, Laura. I have done the best I could for you ever since you were left a wee child in my charge. Your mother, on her death-bed, conjured me never to oppose any choice you might make in a love matter, provided the object was not a rascal. Now, this Guy, 'beggarly salt' though he be, I do not think is a bad man. He is, however, a sloven and a lazybones, otherwise he would be something more, at his age, than the mere captain of a merchant vessel. He acknowledged to me that he has hardly anything laid up in the bank. Now, there is young Treherne, who is not as old as he by several years, and yet has ten thousand pounds in cash and lands. What do you think of that?"

"I think," answered Laura, as she reflected on the young man's sneaking qualities of character, "that I'd sooner have Guy without a shilling than Treherne with a million of pounds."

"Enough!" cried Mr. Stone, her uncle, impatiently. "As I was going to say, your mother exacted from me the promise I have mentioned, and which of course I shall keep. Nevertheless, I shall not settle a penny on you if you marry that sailor, whereas, if you take Treherne—"

"Pray, uncle," interrupted Laura, civilly, "do not mention his name again."

"I will mention it!" cried the exasperated uncle. "Treherne is a smart fellow, brimful of courage, besides other good qualities."

"Courage?"

"Yes. You take a man who, like him, commenced on almost nothing and has attained a position, and you may be sure that he is a man of spirit."

Laura smiled, as in her own mind she had not a high opinion of Treherne's courage.

Her uncle, provoked by that smile, angrily left the room.

A week later Mr. Stone's affairs rendered necessary a visit to his agents in America.

Treherne, hearing that he was going, resolved to accompany him.

At that period steam vessels were not as plentiful as they are now. The passage was to be made in a sailing ship.

Mr. Stone, thinking that when Laura should see more of Treherne she might possibly change her mind, prevailed upon her to accompany him to America, taking care, however, not to mention the name of the man she detested.

Soon they were aboard, and away went the vessel, making good way before a chopping breeze.

Mr. Stone, as was his custom on a voyage, long or short, kept his cabin for the first two or three days. When he came on deck an astounded spectacle greeted him.



Captain Sartoris stood by the weather-rail, chatting with Laura, who, delighted with her companion, looked perfectly charming. Not far off stood Treherne, a young man wearing a little, round grey coat with short tails, tight trousers, and a shining beaver with an enormous rim, according to the then prevailing fashion.

Treherne was biting his nails; he looked vexed.

"What are you doing here?" thundered Stone, walking straight up to Guy.

"Oh, how do you do, sir?" said the captain, in his rough, shaggy coat, resembling a young bear, as he bowed to Stone. Then, turning to his mate, "A pull on those weather-braces, Mr. Sims."

"Ay, ay, sir!" answered Sims, a short, stout fellow, wearing a brown sea-jacket, and having enormous bow legs.

"So you command this ship?" said Stone.

"Yes, sir. That will do, Mr. Sims."

"Well, then," cried Stone, in a rage, "all I have to say is that, had I known it before, I would not have taken passage in the vessel."

"I am sorry, then, you did not know it," said Guy, coolly. "However, you could not have come aboard a faster ship," he added, glancing round him with an air of pride.

Stone turned away scowling, and went below.

"Next time I shall be careful to particularly inquire the name of the captain of whatever vessel I am to take a berth in."

Days passed. Treherne occasionally found an opportunity to speak to Laura, and was not slow to improve it. The girl listened to him through more civility, and but for his innate conceit, he might easily have perceived that his absence was always more agreeable than his company.

"I think I'm making progress," he said one day to Stone.

"Do you, really, my boy? You must keep it up. Don't let that bear of a captain get ahead of you."

There was, in reality, nothing of the bear about Guy except his coat, which was made of the skin of that animal. He was a strong, active, healthy young fellow, with clear eyes, and a voice that could make itself heard above the thunder of a hurricane.

One day, when the vessel was within three days' sail of the American coast, a terrific gale pounced upon the good ship, almost without warning. She just gave one lurch, burying her keel, then up again with a jerk, as her three topgallant sails, torn like rags from the yards, were scooped up by the wind and carried out of sight.

"Steady, there! Mind yourself at the wheel!" howled Sartoris, through his teeth.

Then his agile form was seen swinging far up into the rigging by a rope, an axe in his hand. One blow, and the main-topmast sheet, which, like a snake, had wound itself round the mast, threatening to jerk it over, was severed in twain.

In obedience to the young man's orders, the men, dashing aloft, soon had all the sail in, except a close-reefed foremast and a topmast staysail.

So there was the ship now tearing along, groaning like a wounded lion, through the mad waters, which flew up to her very trucks.

In admiration of the sublime scene, Laura stood near the weather rail. Not far off was Treherne clinging to a rope, and also gazing out upon the wild waters.

"What a terrible storm! and how high the waves run!" said Laura.

"Yes," answered Treherne; "but, do you know, I would like no better fun than to be toiling about upon their white crests for the sake of a good swim."

Laura had heard somewhere that Treherne was an excellent swimmer.

"Surely you do not mean that?" she said.

"Pon honour!"

"Suppose you try now," she said, with sly mischief.

"I've taken one bath this morning,"

answered Treherne, "and I heard a doctor say that it was not good to take too many. I wouldn't therefore care to do the thing, you know, unless it was absolutely necessary."

The vessel was now pitching violently.

"It makes my head dizzy," said Laura. "I think I will go below."

Treherne was about advancing to assist her, when the ship seemed suddenly carried up to the very clouds; then, down she came with a long, mad plunge that made every timber crack as if it were going to part.

"Ob, dear," murmured Laura, putting a hand to her brow, as her brain fairly swam.

"Look out there!" rang in a hoarse scream through the vessel, when *cr-rash!* came a sea—a great mountainous wall of water, sweeping the vessel fore and aft.

There was a gurgling scream from Laura, as, lifted off her feet, her light form was carried away by the mad waters—far away to leeward.

"My niece! oh, Heaven, my niece!" screamed Stone, who had thrust his head through the companion-way just in time to see the girl disappear.

"A boat! a boat!" cried Treherne, running hither and thither, like a terrified deer.

"You'll help us man it, won't ye?" said an old, one-eyed tar as he sprang to the davits.

At this, however, Treherne shrunk away, trembling.

Past him bounded a tall form.

"No boat can live in this sea! No use lowering," came the hoarse voice of the captain.

Round his waist he fastened the end of the sinning sail halliards.

"Stand by to haul!" said he, and plunged into the sea.

For a moment he was invisible, so tremendous was the rush of mad waters over him; then his dark hair was seen away to leeward, contrasting with the foam.

"Why don't you go and help him?" said Stone to Treherne. "You are a good swimmer."

"Ah—yes—I—I can swim; but—but—but—I'm afraid—"

"I'll go myself!" interrupted the uncle, impatiently.

Just then there was a loud cheer from the men.

"He has her! he's got the lass, bless her eyes!" shouted the one-eyed tar. "Now, lads, haul!"

The men seized the rope, pulling with a will. Guy and his burden were thus drawn every moment nearer.

Suddenly a fearful circumstance was noticed.

The rope, every time it flew up, showed that at a certain point it was defective, two of the strands having parted. These strands were seen spinning round and round preparatory to giving way.

Ominous glances were exchanged. Should that rope part the two imperiled ones would be certainly lost!

Mr. Stone clenched his teeth and groaned in his agony.

"I will go to their assistance," said he.

The men would not, however, permit this.

"The rope will part before you can reach them," said one.

The one-eyed sailor, however, fastening a good, strong rope—the end of the main sheet—round him, jumped over to assist his captain.

He was within a foot of him when the dreaded accident took place.

With a snap the rope parted!

"Here, never mind!" cried the captain, "take care of her!"

He had just time to surrender his precious burden to the arms of the one-eyed sailor when a sea caught him and carried him away to leeward.

This wave, however, soon met another, which, overpowering the first, washed the young captain back towards the ship.

"Is she safe?" he screamed, flinging himself half out of water as the vessel went booming past.

"Yes; safe aboard!" was answered.

At the same moment every effort was made to save the captain. Ropes with bowline hitches and several hen-coops were thrown towards him.

The ropes, however, fell short of him, and on went the ship, so that he was soon lost sight of—far astern in the dark waters!

"Lost! lost!" was wailed through the ship.

The first mate now took command. Laura recovered her senses, and asked again and again for Guy. Stone kept the truth from her until she was quite well, when he told all, at the same time declaring his aversion from that moment to Treherne and his admiration of the gallant captain.

The roses faded from Laura's cheek. She mourned day after day for her lover. She would have died but for an unexpected circumstance—a meeting, face to face, in the streets of New York, with the gallant Guy Sartoris!

Explanations were that he had clung to a hen-coop, had been picked up by an English coaster, taken to St. John's, whence he had made his way to New York.

Mr. Stone cheerfully gave his niece to Guy, settling a large sum of money upon her, and declaring that he would have had her marry him after his noble conduct had he not been worth a farthing.

## THE SECRET WHICH PARTED THEM.

—102—

### CHAPTER XXXVII.

LEONI ANGELO talked long and sensibly to Viscount Venwood upon the subject which so nearly affected him; and it was decided that he, Leoni, should go down to Llanroeken Bay, and show Lady Constance the need for giving the Viscount back his promise.

Then the artist turned to matters which concerned himself.

"We have, as one might say, *gone off the line* as regards what brought us together—that is, my desire to learn a few particulars concerning the late Viscount Venwood," he said.

"Ah!" replied the other, "Lady Constance told me you want to find your father, and you have shown me so much good feeling that if I can help you I will, with all my heart. Is it my uncle Richard you wish information about? He was the last Viscount Venwood."

"My father was called Richard, I feel sure," cried Leoni, excitedly. "I have heard my poor mother murmur that name with her sweet eyes dimmed with tears, when she thought herself alone. And I have a book with her name written in it in a man's hand, 'with Richard's love.' Would you know your uncle's writing?"

"No, I should not. He died long before I was born, but my father would remember it. If you will give me the book I will undertake to ask him, although it does not seem so easy a task to me as it does to you. But the truth is, I have never heard the Earl speak of my uncle once during my lifetime. The fact is, there was a sad story in the life of Uncle Richard, so his silence is not, perhaps, to be wondered at. The poor fellow died young."

Leoni leant eagerly forward.

"Will you tell me the name of the lady whom your uncle Richard married?" he asked, with a tremble in his voice.

"He never married at all," answered the Viscount. "He was engaged, but someone—his father, I am afraid—parted him somehow from the woman he loved. It is a sad story altogether."

"And that lady's name?" inquired Leoni, hoarsely, while a strange pallor settled upon his features.

"I really cannot tell you now, my dear fellow," said the Viscount; "but if you will write down upon a piece of paper everything you want to know, and post it to me, I will

dine at home to-morrow night, and pump the Earl after dinner. To-night I am due at the Carlton to meet Mr. Pennington. I suppose you would not care to join us?"

"Thank you, no. I shall start for Llan-rooken Bay before evening. When a thing has to be done, it should be seen to at once."

The subjects of interest to both the young men having been talked out, the Viscount took his leave, wending his way homewards to Mayfair.

He was met by the Countess and Lady Winifred in a great state of excitement.

"Stirling," cried the Countess, "that dear Lady Constance is not dead at all! Mr. Angelo has been here, and told us that she had been rescued, and—"

"And he rescued her. Sir!" broke in Winifred, excitedly. "He did not tell us until I taxed him with it, for I saw that he was keeping something back—and I was right. He saved her, and she is alive and well, but he would not tell us where she is living, for he promised not to do so. I am greatly afraid that Colonel Vivian has been a wretch to her—I am, indeed."

"And he has decidedly been one to me. However, the whole story must be cleared up. One may pay too high a price even to have one's secrets kept, and I am sure Lady Constance will see this, and release me from my promise."

"Stirling," cried Winifred, "I believe you knew she was alive all the time."

"What if I did, my dear girl?"

"Then it is too bad of you. Mother! do you hear? We won't forgive him, will we?"

"I do not know Winny. If he promised to keep her existence secret, I do not know what he could have said; but it is dangerous to have secrets with married women; and you seem to have made a terrible enemy of Colonel Vivian. I am glad to hear from Mr. Pennington that Stella believes no ill of you."

"Have you faith too, mother mine?" he asked, leaning towards her.

She lifted her eyes to his full of love.

"That goes without saying, my son. Am I not your own mother?"

"Yes! thank Heaven! and I would not change you for any other. You have ever been a dear old mother to me!"

"And to me," said Winifred, softly, as her arm was wound lovingly round the neck of the Countess, and her hand was clasped by the Viscount.

"I am very thankful to have such good children," she returned affectionately. "You are the sunshine of my life. All I desire is to see you all three happy."

"I hope we shall be, mother; but I do not yet see how the clouds are to roll by. Still they may. The first thing is to clear my name. Mr. Angelo is going down to Lady Constance for me. Fancy Colonel Vivian daring to tell him that I was a second David, and had robbed him of his wife! I, who love Stella more than life!"

"Is that what he accuses you of, my son? That is very easily disproved. The Colonel cannot be in his right senses."

"I should think he has about broken the heart of that sweet woman, if he has accused her of such a thing," said the Viscount, indignantly. "No wonder they parted, indeed!"

"Poor Lady Constance," murmured the Countess. "I am so sorry for anyone who does not find happiness in married life."

"Well! I must go and dress. I have asked a friend to dine with me to-night at the Carlton."

A bright look sprang into Winifred's eyes. "Is it Mr. Angelo?" she inquired.

"No. Angelo is off to Llan-rooken Bay. It is Mr. Pennington, and I must be there in good time."

That dinner at the club made friends of the two young men, and before the evening was out the Viscount had heard the account of the whole affair—from the finding of the bottle, the meeting with Sir John and Stella, the voyage to Africa, of Isola, and even of his own love

and disappointment. Honest Jo Pennington hid nothing from Stella's lover.

"I am grieved for what you must have suffered," said the Viscount, feelingly. "I can understand what it must be to love such a woman in vain. At the same time, the selfishness of human nature will crop up, you see. I cannot be too thankful that I met her first. Probably I am a less good and patient man than you, and it would have done me more real harm."

"There is no doubt of her devotion to you," admitted Jo honestly. "You would have been pleased, indeed, had you seen her joyful receiving your letter to-day. She forgot even to be angry with Colonel Vivian, and that is saying something."

"Dear Stella! So she is ready to do battle for me!" said the Viscount, happily.

"She is, truly! There is no doubt about that," laughed Jo. "I only hope if ever I, too, find someone to care for me, she will be as staunch and true as Miss Eustace!"

"What about Sir John's adopted daughter?" inquired the Viscount. "There would be a sort of moral fitness now in her falling in love with the man who saved her from such a fiery ordeal. Is she nice and pretty?"

"Yes, she is both. A very sweet little girl—woman, indeed."

"Ah! I see light," returned the other, with a smile. "And now you won't go out of town until this matter is settled, will you?"

"Well, I think I must wait and see you through it. I am really interested in all the actors in this life-drama, and want to see a happy conclusion to the piece before I retire from the scene."

"Now that is good of you—very good. For there must be pain as well as pleasure in it for you; and the worst part of it is the pain is personal, and the pleasure by proxy."

"Yes, it is so. Still, there is real pleasure in seeing those we like and esteem happy."

"I said before that you are a better man than I am, Pennington, and so you are. I am afraid it would be above my standard to rejoice at the joy of others, bought at the expense of my own."

Jo Pennington smiled sadly, and rose to go. "If I can do anything more, you know where to find me," he said. "I am very glad we have had this talk to-night."

"And so am I. Pennington, we must be real friends. If ever I can do you a good turn, don't fail to let me know," and they clasped hands in real friendly feeling, while Leon Angelo was travelling to North Wales through the night.

Before he left London he packed up such data as he thought the Viscount might find useful in gaining the information he desired from the Earl of Douglas.

The book he had named to the Viscount—a sketch of his mother, and the full details which he had collected from all sources—which, though it did not amount to much in itself, still might serve as valuable links to piece other more important facts together.

This done, he registered the packet at the post-office, and returned for his bag, which he had prepared for his journey, and started by an early evening train, snatching a hasty dinner in his rooms before going off.

There was nothing of interest to chronicle upon his journey.

Mrs. Martin looked uncommonly surprised to see him, and Lady Constance still more so.

"Why, Mr. Angelo," she said, rising with a reproachful smile. "I thought I told you not to come here again. Yes here you are!"

"Yes, here I am, and I have come now for your sake."

"For my sake?" she echoed, in surprise.

"Suppose you ask me to sit down, Lady Constance?" he laughed. "Then I might, perhaps, explain matters to you. There is no train back for some hours. I suppose you don't want me to go away at once, do you?"

"I thought you understood that I have

every kindly and grateful feeling towards you?" she said, a little gravely and sadly.

He put out his hand and took hers.

"Lady Constance," he replied, "when I saw you last, I did not understand you—not in the least, although I felt certain that some great sorrow had entered your life; but now I understand you thoroughly, you need fear no misconstruction of your kindness, rest assured."

The steadfast eyes met his in a long, searching gaze.

"What do you know, or think you know?" she asked, in an agitated voice. "I thought that secret was locked in my own breast."

"I know that you are married," he said, as firmly as he could; "and Lady Constance, I would to Heaven I had known it the first day we met; it would have saved me much sorrow."

Yes, you were right; I never told you, but you knew instinctively that I loved you with all my heart, so you avoided me, but you need do so no longer. You may trust to my honour to speak no words which may be painful to you. I know, too, that your husband is not worthy of you, and respect the gentle pride which has made you your own bread-winner, sooner than be dependent upon the man who has so cruelly wronged you in thought. I know how he accused you of leaving Viscount Vanwood, and him of an unlawful devotion to you. I know—"

"But how, how do you know these things?" she asked in agitation.

"Because," said Leon, "I have seen your accuser and heard these very things from his lying lips. Yes, Lady Constance, Colonel Vivian is in London, and we have met."

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LEONI ANGELO regretted his somewhat abrupt words almost as soon as they were spoken, for Lady Constance's hand went to her heart. The beautiful face turned waxen white, and without a word of warning she fell forwards.

For the first time in her life she had fainted.

The artist had been accustomed to attend upon his mother, so he did not call for help, but placed his strong arm about her to support her, as he bathed her white brow with eau de Cologne which he found upon the table close by, and very soon she opened her eyes and looked anxiously around.

"Dear Lady Constance, there is nothing to alarm you. You have strong and real friends to stand by you, and you must let your innate courage come to the front, and, secure in your innocence, face these cruel slanders, which will not only spoil your own life and render it desolate, but also the lives of others who are equally free from blame. This tale has been carried by Colonel Vivian not only to me and my uncle, Count Angelo, but to Sir John Eustace and his daughter; and Heaven only knows what may come of it unless you put the scandal down with a powerful hand once and for ever. Indeed, dear Lady Constance, pardon me for saying so, but surely it would have been best to silence Colonel Vivian at once, before this case became as serious as it now is."

"Do you know why I did not?" asked her ladyship, proudly.

"No, I cannot say I do. It was doubtless from some right and kind, though possibly mistaken, motive."

"Mr. Leon," cried she, with excitement, "if a secret had been entrusted to you, would you have betrayed it to save yourself sorrow, when you felt sure that your betrayal of it would have brought trouble on those who trusted you? Do not think I have not suffered. I have asked myself these questions again and yet again, until my brain feels as though it must give way, but always with the same result. I cannot see that I could have acted otherwise."

"I am not able to judge unless you will put the facts of the case plainly before me," said Leon, gently.

She hesitated; then the need to be helped made her speak.



"Yes, I can do that. I need use no names. I had two friends who loved one another very truly. They were not permitted, however, to hold any communication. The course of their love ran in very rough water, and over heartless and jagged stones. In my place, Mr. Leoni, what would you have done? As I did, I expect. You would have assisted them so far as it lay in your power.

"I did this, promising on no account to tell their secret even to my husband. Little did I dream what this promise would cost me; but I did know how very easily little things slip out in easy converse over a cigar, and that sort of thing, and I feared Clement might by word or look do mischief, however unintentionally. Even a smile at the wrong moment may betray a secret, and ruin a lifetime of happiness. Well, of course I used to carry letters to my two friends from each other, and Colonel Vivian saw one given me, and heard some words upon which he put a wrong construction; and the very day upon which you and I first met we quarrelled in the train. Yes! that fine man in the corner who read the paper so diligently was my husband, although I do not think you were aware that we were travelling together at all. He insisted upon my giving him up the letter in my hand-bag, and refused, and when he would have taken it by force I flung it straight out of the window!

A glance shot from her ladyship's bright eyes. She enjoyed that little triumph even now, notwithstanding all she had suffered for it.

"But surely," said Leoni, gravely, "you might have made Colonel Vivian sensible of your position, and not have wrecked your happiness over such an absurdly small rock?"

"It would seem so to you as an onlooker; but it is over small things that most life wrecks come. My temper was aroused as well as his. I could not brook such words as he addressed to me. I could not put up with distrust, when I knew that I had never had one wandering thought from him. Mine is a nature to love deeply, and I loved him with all my heart and soul," she ended, with a tremble about the beautiful mouth.

"And do you love him still, Lady Constance?" inquired Leoni, watching the sad, sweet face.

There was a long pause.

The strong pride in the woman's heart was warring against the love in that of the wife.

"Why do you ask?" she queried earnestly.

"I was wondering," he said, "whether the generosity of your nature would induce you to forgive him, even though he has sinned against you!"

"I do forgive him," she murmured, "but I fear I could never forget."

"A qualified forgiveness is no forgiveness at all, Lady Constance, only a salve to the conscience. Pardon me if I speak plainly, but I think you would be happier if you could forgive your husband fully. He has behaved insultingly, and cruelly, but if I am any reader of countenances he has suffered acutely. Will you see him yourself and explain all—or will you leave it to Viscount Venwood to do? You start! you did not think I knew who your friends were, but I do. They were Viscount Venwood and Miss Estlin!"

"Who told you?" she asked, helplessly.

"It seems I have wrecked my life to keep a secret which was no secret at all, and which has been blown by the winds of Heaven in all directions. It is hard, it is hard!" and she tapped her small foot restlessly upon the ground, while tears welled to her eyes and dimmed their brightness.

"Yes! it has been very hard, but I think, if you will, everything can be set right. The slender must be refuted, and at once. It is this which brought me down. The Viscount promised you not to speak of you or to reveal your address. You must free him from his obligation to you, and he will at once see Colonel Vivian and explain to him the very simple nature of the secret which has parted you two, and I feel sure that your husband

will be overcome with shame and remorse. It would then be the time for you to be generous, if you desire a reconciliation."

"I do not desire it," she answered proudly. "A man who could doubt my honesty once would be capable of questioning it again. Not let Colonel Vivian have the freedom he desired; it suits his roving taste. Viscount Venwood is at liberty to say what he likes to him. The secret has been kept by me, although it was never mine. If Estlin agrees to its being told I can have no objection, but I shall in no way communicate with Colonel Vivian. He told me plainly that he did not wish me to write, and I will not do so. He said we must live apart, and I accept his decision. I have grown very fond of my cozy home. I can earn enough to live upon in this humble way, and the poor folk around would miss me. I hope to live and die in this quiet nook, and I should like my home to be their rightful place, so that when the great awakening comes and there are no secrets to part us, he shall know that I was true, and enter our new life together. We shall forget the old trouble then in the joy. But, as far as I am concerned, I hope Colonel Vivian may never learn where to find me. I leave the Viscount free from all promises; but still I feel that Clement Vivian and I had better not meet again. Now tell me, if you know, how is Stella? I loved the girl very dearly indeed."

Leoni then told Lady Constance the story of that finding of that vagrant bottle, and all that followed, as far as he had learned the details from the Viscount, but he had not then had that after-dinner talk with Mr. Pennington.

However, he was able to tell her enough to explain the situation to her, and her clear mind grasped it readily.

"I am sorry Clement was undecieved," she said. "It would have been better for him to think me dead. Then his heart would have turned to me recalling other days remorsefully. Yes; it would have been better for us both that he should think me dead, for who could war with dumb, unconscious clay? Not even my husband, Clement Vivian, who yet could doubt the warm, true heart which beat for him. Now let us close the theme, my friend. Permit me, all of you, to live my life in peace alone. For the rest, may you each and all be happy. No unkind thoughts will disturb the current of my mind. From my heart, as the Christmas chimes ring out from that quaint old church along the cliff, and come to me upon the breeze, I shall be able to say, 'Peace and good-will.' Let Viscount Venwood speak or be silent, whichever serves him best, and may he and Stella yet find that joy together which I was once insane enough to think that I, myself, had found."

"And you, Mr. Angelo, my kindly friend, may you be happy too. I am grieved that your young life should have been clouded by that dream; but the memory of it will soon fade, and we may then be true friends, perhaps."

"Yes! When I have outlived that dream, Lady Constance, I will come again; but it may be some time first, for, indeed, it was to me a golden one!"

#### CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE Viscount received the package from Leoni, and kept his promise.

He remained at home to dinner, and as soon as the servants had retired from the room he brought the subject upon the tapis before his mother and sister.

"Father," he said, in his direct manner, "do you know I have scarcely heard a word of the lives of my ancestors, even of a late generation, and such ignorance makes a fellow almost ridiculous at times. A day or two since, for instance, I was asked who the lady was to whom my uncle Richard was engaged, and perhaps married; but for the life of me I couldn't answer, so I thought I had better look up a page or two of my family history."

"I cannot see," said the Earl, gravely, "that the affairs of the dead—and-gone

members of our family can hold any interest for strangers, whatever they may do for you."

"Ah! but they will unearth them, and ignorance and mystery only make things worse. From what I was told there are people living who know more upon the subject than I do of my grandfather and uncle, and that is awkward, and open to comment."

The Earl's face grew dark and cloudy. His son had rather put him in a corner.

"I wish people would not trouble themselves with our concerns," he said, vexedly.

"So do I; but that won't stop them. They say a good deal about my uncle Richard and his father. Was there a marriage or not?"

"No, certainly not. One of them would have told me if such a serious step had been taken," replied the Earl, hastily. "You do not see the magnitude of such a thing as regards me and mine. I do not in the least imagine that Richard was such a lunatic, although he did threaten his father to run off with the girl if he did not consent. But I don't believe she would have done it. She was as proud as she was poor. Proud as we are, I think she quite pulled any number of the Douglas family."

"And what was the objection to her?" inquired Stirling.

"There were several. First, she was not English; secondly, she had no fortune; thirdly, she was in a dependent position. No, it was absurd. Richard should never have been so unwise as to fall in love with her; and our father was right to say no."

"Oh! so my uncle really cared for her?" asked Stirling.

"There was no doubt about that. He was madly in love with her."

"And is it true that my grandfather sent the lady away, so that poor uncle Richard could not find her, and that he took his own life, being mad with sorrow?"

A glance of reproof and anger shot out from the Earl's eyes.

Winifred was gazing at her father with deep interest, breathlessly waiting for his reply, and her interest made him the more annoyed.

"Leave the room, Winifred," said he, sternly. "Such conversations are not fit for your ears. Your brother ought to know better than to speak of such things before you. In every family there are circumstances to be regretted, but they should not be brought to light."

Lady Winifred was too wise to disobey her father.

She arose at once, and went away; but she determined to get the story out of her mother as soon as she followed her.

She had never heard the romantic but sad tale before, and it had taken her fancy.

When Winifred was gone the Earl turned sharply upon his son.

"You have set that girl's mind off now. She will want a history of her own to match that of her ancestor."

"I don't think you need be afraid of Winny, papa. She is a good, sensible girl, and a great comfort to me," struck in the Countess's voice. "And Stirling is right: it is better he should know the family records."

"Do you think I carry them at my fingers' ends?" asked Lord Douglas, irritably.

But his wife did not answer him, and he went on,—

"Now, Stirling, what do you want to know?"

"The name of the lady, and her position in life."

"Miss Angela was companion, I believe, to Lady Catherine, who was mother to Lady Constance Vivian, and, I think, an Italian by birth. I have nothing to say against her—in fact, no one had, but her position debased her, of course, from becoming the future Countess of Douglas. We certainly did not want the taint of foreign blood in our family. It was honestly Scotch up to the time of the Union, since which some of us have married English wives, but never a lady of foreign



[LEONI DID NOT CALL FOR HELP, BUT SUPPORTED LADY CONSTANCE IN HIS STRONG ARMS AS SHE FELL FORWARD.]

extraction; and Miss Angelo was altogether an Italian by birth and education, although I admit she spoke fluent English, and was a remarkably clever woman."

"Has it ever struck you, pater, that the Italian artist who has made for himself a name in London is probably a relation of hers?" asked the Viscount.

"To tell the truth, I have not thought upon the subject. Young artists are not much in my line; but I remember now your mother mentioned that one had been here to see you lately, and she liked him."

"With your permission, father, I shall ask him to dinner. He is a very remarkably nice fellow, and if you see him I think you will be interested in him."

"Please yourself," returned the Earl, coldly. "I do not care much for foreign adventurers myself, but if your mother would like to sit for her portrait I should be pleased to have a good picture of her. Those we have do not do her justice."

"I should like it," said the Countess, eagerly, for she saw that her son wished Leoni to come to the house, and she too liked him; and if the poor fellow was the son of that sweet woman, Marie Angelo, of whom she had so often heard, she would like to be kind to him.

The only thing which troubled her about Leoni was her daughter Winifred. She saw quite plainly that the girl was most deeply interested in him, and she knew human nature well enough to be aware that if she attempted opposition she would be the hot iron which renders the marking-ink indelible.

Winifred might get over it if left alone. The ink might wash out, but if once the scorching iron of anger and prohibition descended on her, her fate would be fixed, and she would be in as difficult a position as her brother; and more so, for a man has the power to stand alone so much better than a girl, and the Viscount's future was, of course, assured.

So it was settled that Leoni should be asked to paint a portrait of the Countess, and that the Viscount should invite him to dinner upon an early day.

Lady Winifred's heart felt as light as air when she heard of it, and she was not many hours before she coaxed the story of her uncle Richard's love and death out of her mother.

"And is Mr. Angelo related to this poor, dear, cruelly ill-used Marie Angelo?" she inquired, with interest.

"Ah! that we do not know," answered her mother, gently. "Evidently, Mr. Angelo is uncertain of his parentage himself. It is a pity, for he is very nice."

"Nice! Oh! mother, he is altogether charming! So handsome, and so clever," said the girl with warmth.

"Winny," whispered her mother gently, "have you forgotten that your father only gave you until to-night to decide about Sir William Markham? He would be a remarkably good match, remember that."

"What do you call a good match, dear mother?" asked Winifred, falling on her knees before her, and clasping her hands fondly, while the speaking dark eyes were upturned, and full of feeling.

"Well, darling, in this case he would I am sure be kind to you. It would not amount to your being an old man's darling, for Sir William is only forty, but he would be sufficiently matured to be a valuable protector; his knowledge of the world, and his fortune and position are undeniable."

"And you call that a good match, mother! My idea of such a thing is to find a man who is honest and true, and one to whom one's heart responds in love, no matter what his age, his fortune, or his place in the world; and unless I can find all that, dear, I shall never marry at all. So will you kindly tell my father this for me, and say that, however good Sir William may be, I cannot possibly accept him."

"I was afraid you would say that, Winny," replied her mother. "Well dear, I am sorry,

for your father will, I know, be vexed with you."

"But you are not vexed, mother?"

"No, child! Everyone should choose a mate for themselves. I would never bias anybody. Then there would be more happy marriages, even if a few imprudent ones were made!"

"And you will tell my father?"

"I must, I suppose. I have not much choice in the matter; but Winny, I don't pretend to like the task," she ended, with a sad smile. Nor did she find it in any way more pleasant than she had anticipated.

The Viscount did not show his father the contents of the packet that night. He had heard enough to make him feel uneasy, and he wished to see the effect of Leoni's personal appearance upon his father.

There was a growing conviction in his mind that the Italian artist was related to his family, and the importance of ascertaining whether he was legally so was hanging over him as a dark cloud.

To do the Viscount justice he had no intention of shrinking from the subject, serious as it was, and he suppressed the evidence he had, lest the Earl should refuse to see Leoni. His brain was in a whirl of excitement, and sleep would not come to him. If his uncle Richard had married Leoni's mother, the artist, and not his father was the rightful Earl of Douglas, and he himself was no one, but just plain Mr. Douglas, the grandson of the late Earl, and no Viscount at all.

To say that he did not shrink from the idea would be totally incorrect. Still he felt that he was man enough to meet the situation. There was only one thing which made him pause, Stella Eustace.

It was the loss to her of position and wealth. He had not one thought that she would desert him. His faith in her was great, and not to be shaken; but it was a bitter thought to him that she had accepted him rich to find him poor!

(To be continued.)





["HE NEVER DID IT!" LEAH CRIED, PASSIONATELY. "IT IS A WICKED SLANDER!"]

NOVELETTE.]

## MORE KITH THAN KIND.

—O—

### CHAPTER I.

"I wish I was dead!"

It was sad that lips so young should frame such a wish; terrible to hear the tragic expression of the sweet, young voice, now so jarred and out of tune.

"It would be better for all, perhaps, if you were," answered Everett Darrell. "You are nothing but a burden and disgrace to your relatives!"

"Disgrace!" cried the girl, passionately. "Oh! not that! anything but that, Uncle Darrell!" and her great, grey eyes sought him pleadingly.

But there was not the least kindness in his face, no relenting; and a sullen look settled on the youthful features, in the dusky eyes.

She was only a child of fifteen, but already life was hard with her, and in all the world she stood alone.

Her mother died long since, her father she could not remember; and then a certain Mr. Mann, who until now she had believed her uncle, stepped forward to offer shelter and love to the desolate child.

What love he lavished on her words would fail to tell; what happy, happy days they spent together, she dared not now remember, for the kind friend lay silent in his narrow grave, deaf to her sobs and prayers, unconscious of her misery.

With him had died the little annuity which they had found ample for their wants, and Leah Harwood was a penniless child, at the mercy of the world.

Against his will, Everett Darrell, her mother's own brother, came forward to offer her a home, but so ungraciously, with so many bitter complainings of her poverty and his own

small means, that the child felt that to eat his bread would choke her.

But then, what could she do? She was only fifteen, and of gentle birth, quite unfitted for a hand-to-hand fight with the world, quite incapable of gaining the scantiest livelihood.

As she stood in the watery gleam of winter sunshine her young face hardened, until it bore some slight resemblance to Darrell's.

"How am I disgraced?" she asked at last, in a hard tone. "Tell me that, if you please?"

"Your father is an escaped felon!" he answered, brutally.

Leah started as though she had been struck.

"A felon! I can't, I won't believe it!"

"You may," grimly. "He was tried for forgery and convicted, and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment at Portland; but he was a clever scamp, and before three had passed he managed to effect his escape. His shame killed your mother!"

The child drew herself to her full height, and she was tall for a girl of fifteen.

"I will believe in my father despite of all! You speak as though you hated him; and perhaps are lying to me; but—but—" and here the young voice faltered, "tell me the truth just this once. Is he alive now?"

"I hope not; and I have lied to you in nothing. Now, go and put your things together; we must reach home before night."

"Home!" the child whispered to her aching heart; "there is no home for me now! Oh, uncle! uncle! come back to me! come back!" and she wrung her hands in bitterest anguish, whilst despair and pain changed and distorted the young face until it was terrible to look upon.

Friendless, penniless, and worse than orphaned, and only fifteen! What wonder the poor child longed for death!

But Mr. Darrell left her small time for weeping or thought. He constantly urged her

(from the foot of the staircase) to hurry her preparations, and presently she appeared carrying a small trunk.

There was no one "to give her greeting or good-bye," Everett Darrell having dismissed the one faithful servant as soon as Mr. Mann was laid low, so Leah stole downstairs into the little hall; but, to her surprise, no cab awaited them.

"We can carry this between us," said Darrell, seizing one handle of the modest trunk; "it isn't far to the station."

She was surprised, having always understood that Uncle Darrell was a rich man; but she was afraid to say anything, and trudged on beside him in utter silence until they reached the little station.

Here he took third-class tickets for Thoseldean; and, having ensconced himself behind a newspaper, left her wholly neglected during the entire time occupied by the journey.

It was quite dark when they reached the dreary station of Thoseldean; but Mr. Darrell made his way across the platform, through the booking-office, outside of which stood a shabby chaise, to which was harnessed a diminutive pony, held by a diminutive servant, who might have been any age from sixteen to sixty.

"Well, Topham, has Miss Drusilla returned?" he asked.

"No, sir; but Becky says she's coming to-morrow by the eleven o'clock train, and is getting ready for her. Jump in, miss, if you please. Smut has been standing quite long enough."

Leah did as she was bidden, and Topham taking the reins, started at a brisk pace for the Hermitage, as Darrell's house was called.

It came in sight at last; a long, rambling place, dark with age and weather, and in sad need of paint. From what could be seen of the garden it was large and ill-kept, weeds and flowers growing together in the wildest confusion; the drive was covered with rank grass, and had many holes and pitfalls for the

unwary. But the travellers reached the house in safety, and the door was opened to them by an old woman of very sour aspect.

"You're late, master," she said, with a quick look at the shrinking child, "but too early for Miss Drusilla. She ain't coming home till to-morrow. So that's Harold Harwood's girl, is it? Well, it's to be hoped she won't bring trouble to your house, master. Step this way, miss, if you please," and leading the way upstairs she ushered Leah into a small, gaily-lighted room, very tastefully furnished. "You can find your way down," she said, merrily, "there ain't no turns in the staircase; and be quick, if you please, the master ain't one for waiting lights when we're alone. There's enough waste when she's home."

"You mean my cousin?" Leah questioned, stifling sorrow and anger alike in the vain hope that this unknown cousin might prove a friend and ally.

"Of course I do. There ain't no one else as'd humour."

"Is she beautiful and kind? Oh! do you think she will like me?" with childish eagerness.

"She's beautiful enough," truthfully; "as for anything else, you must find out for yourself. But why else should like you is a puzzle. You're taught but an overbearing," and having concluded her remarks with Becky hurried away, leaving the poor orphan child, doubly desolate, doubly wretched.

But she was too proud for tears. All that was soft and lovable in her nature seemed changed and warped by her wretched surroundings; and when Becky summoned her to dinner she went down with an air of composure, wonderful in one so young.

The meal was of the simplest and poorest description, and it seemed to Leah that her uncle watched grudgingly every mouthful she compelled herself to eat. She was heartily glad when he gave her permission to retire, and looking her door upon all intruders, fell on her knees beside the open window and prayed wildly that Heaven would teach her how to earn an honest livelihood so that she might escape from these harsh and miserably relatives.

She could not cry. No tears would come to ease the sobbing of her heart; only she threw out her arms with a wild gesture, meaning out, "Oh, my dear! my dear! come back to me, I am so lonely and so wretched! There is not one to love me now that you are gone."

Then she thought of the story Everett Darrell had told her concerning her father, and vowed in her young heart she would keep her faith in his goodness always—always; although, indeed, she found that was hard already. Poor Leah!

Despite her misery she soon fell asleep, and being very weary slept far into the morning. She woke at last with a great start to find Becky standing frowning down upon her.

"You ain't a very early riser," she said, gruffly, "and late hours don't find favour with the master. You'd better hurry up before he gets home from the station."

Leah needed no second bidding. Dressing hastily, she ran downstairs and ate an unappetising breakfast of thick slices of stale bread almost unacquainted with butter, and drank a cup of very watery cold tea. Then Becky came in and told her she was wanted to dust Miss Drusilla's rooms, and, glad of any employment, Leah hurried to do her bidding.

She was surprised when she saw the dainty, sumptuously-furnished apartments, having no idea that the Hermitage could boast so much beauty; and she took a genuine pleasure in rearranging the bric-à-brac and draping the silken curtains.

The bedroom was hung with crimson and gold, and ornamented with some choice water-colour pictures; the boudoir—a miracle of upholsterer's art—was in pink and silver, and over the mantel hung a portrait of a most beautiful girl. The lovely, haughty face, the

passionate, dark eyes held Leah captive, and she gazed like one spell-bound, all unconscious, poor little soul, that as the years rolled by her beauty would be even greater than her cousin's.

"I shall love her," she whispered to her forlorn heart. "She is so lovely, and she looks too proud to be unkind."

When her work was done and she had washed her hands and smoothed her wavy hair, she sat down in her own room and tried to occupy herself with some fine embroidery; but her eyes, like her thoughts, would wander; and when she heard the sound of carriage wheels, she started excitedly to her feet, her lips parted and a soft flush on her young face. Mr. Darrell was driving, and by his side sat the original of that wonderful portrait—Drusilla Darrell.

She was twenty years old, taller than is common with women, dark as a Spaniard, beautiful as a dream; but the face was haunted with pride, and one was tempted to believe that the curved mouth could grow hard and cruel if its owner's will should be thwarted.

But Leah was too young to think such things, and she ran heartily downstairs, feeling assured of a kindly greeting from her cousin.

As father and daughter entered the little dark hall, the former turned to Leah, and half-frowning, said,—

"This is your cousin, my dear."

"Harold Harwood's child? She is like her father's people. How do you do, Leah?" and she extended the tips of two immaculately gloved fingers to her young relative. "You are tall for your age."

"I am fifteen," answered Leah, in a hard tone, chilled and mortified beyond measure by her manner, "and not nearly as tall as you."

"Comparisons are odious," with a short laugh, and a contemptuous glance. "I am a woman grown, and you a child!"

A child! With that passionate, aching heart! A child with all the misery of these past few days that have seemed as centuries! A child, with all the weight of desolation oppressing her! As father and daughter turned away she laughed a little, low, bitter laugh; then sobbed—but always tearlessly—and all her soul was in hot revolt against her miserable fate.

"I shall go mad or die!" she wailed. "Oh! I wish I could lie down to-night and never, never wake again. How glad they all would be!"

## CHAPTER II.

"Your uncle and I have been speaking of your future, Leah," said Drusilla, languidly, the day after her return home.

Leah looked up apprehensively, and waited for Miss Darrell to continue. This she did after a long and unnecessary pause.

"My father wished to article you to some trustworthy governess, that in time you might be fitted to earn a livelihood; but I argued that would hardly be a suitable provision."

"Oh yes, yes, Cousin Drusilla! Let me go away, let me only feel I am of some use in the world; that I can earn sufficient to clothe me decently—and I shall be happy."

"Your ideas of happiness are strange, and as my opinion is entirely different to my father's, I am afraid, Leah, you will have to remain content with us. I hold it would be derogatory for you to occupy the position mentioned—derogatory to your mother's family, I mean; and I prefer to make you useful at home. From the specimens of your work I have seen, I am sure you could be of great assistance to me; for myself I hate needlework, and could never repair the slightest rent in any garment. So I think that it would be well to keep you here; you can mend and make, and I can easily teach you how to do my hair."

"A governess ranks a little higher than a maid," said Leah, bluntly, and Drusilla's eyes flashed ominously.

"Beggars cannot be choosers!" she retorted coldly. "You should thank yourself fortunate to secure such a home as this, such countenance as we give you. You, a forger's child!"

"He never did it!" cried Leah, half beside herself. "He never did it! This is only a wicked story invented to make me more miserable than I am!"

Drusilla laughed a short irritating laugh.

"My dear, you are perfectly welcome to your belief if it makes you happy; but you must not indulge in such paroxysms of temper; they are unladylike and intolerable. Now, go to your work and think over what I have said."

"Questa," cried the wretched young creature, "do not hate me. I am all alone in the world, and my heart feels as though it would break. Only say you will love me a little."

Drusilla looked at her with stony contempt.

"That will do; I hate her," and opening a new novel gave herself up wholly to it, pitying the unfortunate heroine as she currently would not, or could not, pity any mere piece of flesh and blood.

Poor Leah crept away to her dining, rendered harder and bitterer by her cousin's words and manner; and from that day she made neither appeal, gesture, nor complaint of, her lot.

Heavy day followed heavy day, each one the exact likeness of the predecessor, and there was small wonder that Leah's heart failed her, that soul and sense alike were numbed.

There was none to speak a comfortable word to her, none to curb that haughty spirit, or soften the rapidly hardening heart. Becky and her uncle were actively antagonistic, and the beautiful Drusilla treated her with a fine indifference worse than anything else to bear. She worked harder than any general servant; from rising to going to bed, every moment was fully occupied—dusting, mending, making those fine laces in which Drusilla's heart delighted, and her position in the house was that of a maid.

When Miss Darrell's friends flocked to the Hermitage Leah was banished to the kitchen or her own room, and kept in rigorous seclusion. Meantime all others, Everett Darrell was exceptionally generous to his only child, but Leah dreaded the advent of visitors, knowing that when they were gone there would be extra pinching and saving to atone for past extravagance. She sometimes wondered as she brushed or braided Drusilla's wealth of hair why it was her lovely cousin had no acknowledged sister amongst all her train of admirers. She did not yet understand Drusilla's ambitious nature, or know how many moths had singed their wings at her particular flame; the high value she placed upon her beauty, and the great things she hoped it would bring her. It was well known that Everett Darrell was a rich man, and perhaps her prospective fortune added to his daughter's charms. To Becky she had openly avowed her intention of marrying a title, and the old servant had muttered,—

"It's very likely you may do so. There's plenty poor lords would be glad to spend your fortune for you. But when it's gone, how much do you think they'd care for you?"

"You're a disagreeable old creature," retorted the young lady, "and I am sorry I thought of confiding in you."

Becky smiled grimly and said no more, but Drusilla made no further attempt at confidential conversation; only, sometimes, when she grew weary of her own society, she would tell Leah stories of the world in which she moved, and where alone she was happy, and Leah listened with down-dropped head and curling lip, scornful of its follies and vices, its fickle, fleeting friendships, and day by day her heart grew harder, and tender love came with its softening influence Leah would grow



into a bitter misanthrope. Two years passed slowly by, and she was now a tall slip of a girl, seventeen years old; beautiful, and giving promise of increasing loveliness. It is true, she was poorly and scantily clad, that her hands were toil-worn, and her face paler, sterner, than it should be, and that the grey eyes

"Deeper than the depths  
Of waters stilled at even,"

were too sad, too sombre. But nothing could hide her growing beauty, and Drusilla regarded her with jealous eyes. Perhaps she was less confident of her power than she had been two years since, for as yet no eligible parti had presented himself as suitor for her hand.

She spent the greater part of that season in town, and at the close of it wrote Mr. Darrell she was about to return home, adding,—

"Pray have the house made presentable, as Ethel Pont and Mr. Owen Emery return with me. He is fairly well-to-do, and highly connected; and has given very evident proof of his admiration for me. Unless a more eligible parti appears, I think it would be well to accept him."

So the old house was painted and papered from garret to basement, the family plate polished until each separate piece might serve for a mirror. New curtains draped the windows, and although Mr. Darrell groaned in spirit over such waste, he made no protest against it.

Becky did all the grumbling, which saved him a deal of labour.

In due time Drusilla and her friends arrived, and two days later Miss Pont's lover followed her to Thoseldean, by which arrangement Owen Emery was afforded ample opportunities of improving his lady-love's acquaintance.

He was a fine, manly young fellow, with frank blue eyes and chestnut hair. Broad-shouldered and stalwart, he was a fit presentment of a true-born Englishman, and, as Miss Pont secretly thought,—

"Far too good for Drusilla Darrell."

He was not passionately in love, but the girl's beauty appealed to his artistic sense. He admired her more than any woman he had ever met, and if he must marry, why not marry her?

So he drifted with the stream, and enjoyed life to the utmost.

Then there came a night when he stood with Drusilla under the stars, and she was so radiant, so gentle in ways and words that he put his fate to the test then and there.

It is needless to say he was accepted, and the next day a gold ring, set with rubies, proclaimed that Drusilla was engaged.

Becky carried the news to Leah.

"The master had better let them marry straight off," she said, savagely, "or we'll find this courting and philandering come pretty dear. It frightens me to think of the money that'll be spent on the wedding fiery. Miss Drusilla *does* make it fly, and he can't say her nay. There they go—look, Leah! He's a likely young chap, but I don't fancy he's very rich, or she'd make a greater fuss about her engagement."

Looking from the window Leah saw Owen Emery walking beside her cousin.

He was so big and strong, he wore such a protective air as he bent over his fiancée, that the girl's heart rose in hot revolt against her own lot.

Was Drusilla to have every good thing—money, friends, pleasure, lovers? Oh! it was hard! it was hard!

That night she wandered out alone, over the wide, breezy downs by which the Hermitage was surrounded, and standing on an eminence, from which she caught the distant gleam of a turbulent sea, thought bitterly of all that lay before her—the hard, cruel life; the lonely nights and days; the utter desolation spread out before her—and she could have cried aloud, but pride and her strong will pre-

vented her. She was startled when a voice beside her said,—

"I beg your pardon, but—"

She turned sharply and saw Owen Emery. "I have lost my way," he added. "Could you direct me to the Hermitage?" and in his eyes there was a look of surprised admiration.

"It lies straight before you; from where I stand you may see the chimneys," she answered, curtly, the old sullen look creeping over and marring her face. "You can't miss it."

"I am afraid I am very stupid," he said, with a pleasant smile, "for upon my word these endless drits and gullies confuse me. If—if I might take so great a liberty, I would ask you to start me on my journey."

She flashed passionately upon him.

"I am not a district guide!"

Owen Emery recoiled from her in some astonishment.

The tone of her voice, the angry impatience on her face, might well startle him.

But underlying all her anger, all her impatience, was such a look of sorrow, such weariness of the world and herself, that he felt nothing but pity for her.

"I am sorry I have given you offence," he said, gently. "Believe me it was unintentional," and he turned to go.

It was the first time since her coming to the Hermitage that any one had addressed her kindly, and with swift compunction she followed him.

"I beg your pardon," she said, shamefacedly. "I behaved very rudely. Let me atone by taking you to the Hermitage, I live there."

"You live there! Then, how is it I have never seen you?"

"I am only one of the servants," with a little bitter sneer, "and you are a guest!"

"You mean—you mean you are Miss Darrell's companion?"

"Do I look like a companion?" with a scornful glance at her scanty, shabby attire. "Isn't a companion expected to dress well, be mild of voice and manner? and look at my hands. No; I tell you candidly I am a maid of all work."

"I can't understand it. You neither speak nor look like a servant; you are evidently jesting with me."

"I never jest, that is a forgotten accomplishment."

"You speak bitterly," more and more perplexed by her manner, more attracted by her wonderful beauty than he cared to show, "far too bitterly for one so young."

"Leah made a gesture of supreme weariness."

"I sometimes think I never was young these last two years have been so long—so long!" and then she broke off abruptly as though ashamed and frightened by her own candour.

"Have you no friends?" the young man asked, gently.

"Friends! No! I am all alone in the world."

"But surely Miss Darrell is good to you? Tell me that."

In the gathering dusk the dark grey eyes met his searchingly, then Leah said, coldly,—

"You are the fittest judge of Miss Darrell's disposition; surely you know she is all kindness," but something in her tone made him uneasy.

"Here is the gate," she added after a minute's pause. "Good-night."

"Good night, and thank you. If—if I can do anything for you I shall be glad."

He spoke hurriedly and shamefacedly, but the girl, looking at him as he was in earnest, and his kind words fell on her heart like rain on the thirsty ground.

"You are very good," and now her voice was low and sweet; "but no one can help me, and I must feign content if I do not feel it."

"But should anything transpire in which my assistance—"

"Nothing can or will; but I am grateful to you, Mr. Emery."

"Will you not tell me your name?"

"They call me Leah," and before he could stay her she was gone.

Owen Emery walked to the house in a state of perplexity. Who and what was Leah? He could not believe she had been born to her mental state. She looked and spoke like a lady, and was divinely beautiful, despite the half sullen expression of face and eyes. He would ask Drusilla about her mysterious handmaid, and intent upon this thought he quickly made his way to his fiancée's side.

"Where have you been?" she questioned, with a smile.

"On the downs, where I lost myself, but fortunately I fell in with one of the inmates of the house, and she brought me safely back. By the way, what a handsome girl Leah is."

Miss Darrell flushed slightly.

"She is rather well looking."

"Is it true she is your maid, Drus? Yes? Then how on earth did she get such refinement of speech and manner?"

"You are not complimentary," laughing; "but Leah comes of rather a superior family, only unfortunately her father committed a forgery for which he is now undergoing imprisonment."

### CHAPTER III.

"DRUSILLA!"

"It is quite true, Owen; and papa, taking pity on the poor girl, brought her here. But she is not grateful, and, indeed, is of such a peculiarly morose temperament, that but for the pity I have for her I should dismiss her."

"Poor girl! poor girl! I suppose her peculiar position has something to do with her unhappy temper. Has she been long with you?"

"More than two years; and in all that time she has utterly refused to accept the slightest gift from me. In fact, I believe she hates me for my more fortunate lot."

Here Drusilla was called upon to sing, and Owen was left to his own reflections.

Do what he would, he could not forget the beautiful pale face of his late companion, the sombre eyes, whose wistfulness had struck him so painfully.

Poor girl! The chill of a felon, sensitive to her disgrace, and occupying so poor a position, what wonder she developed so bitter a disposition!

"I should like to help her. I will help her if I can," he thought, and never reflected on the danger of such a proceeding.

It would be useless to interest Drusilla in her, as the girl had such an aversion to her. No; he must work alone, and amongst his lady friends surely he would find one to hold out a kindly hand to this victim of fortune? He would have been unpleasantly surprised could he have followed his fiancée's proceedings that night.

Passing at Leah's door she listened a moment to the girl's regular breathing, then noiselessly entering, held her lamp high above the bed, so that its light fell athwart the beautiful, sorrowful face.

Her own was white with passion as she stooped and shook the sleeper by the arm.

"Wake! wake!" she said, in a low, intense tone. "I want to speak to you."

Leah turned, opened her heavy eyes, then sat upright.

"What is it, Drusilla? Am I never to have any rest?"

"Oh, I want nothing done, thank you," sneeringly, "although I might conscientiously demand your entire services. But I do want to know how it happened you were Mr. Emery's companion this evening?"

"His companion? Don't you mean his guide? I have nothing to say but that having committed no sin any defence is absurd."

"Be careful, Leah! you are only here on tolerance, and any offence against me would be visited severely upon you by my father. I

am not unmerciful or unmindful of your wretched condition, but you must not try me far. Mr. Emery is my affianced husband, and any absurd attempt to change his allegiance will be sharply punished. He knows your story—the blot on your name. If you are wise you will not give him amusement for his leisure hours," and allowing Leah no chance of replying she sailed out.

The poor child sat erect, her cheeks burning, her heart throbbing with outraged dignity.

Then suddenly flinging out her arms she cried,—

"Oh! Heaven help me! Heaven pity me! What is my sin that I should so sorely suffer? Oh! it is unjust—unjust that I should know no least joy, no least kindness!"

And then by degrees her thoughts turned to Owen, the first who had spoken gently to her through all these weary months.

As she recalled his look, his tone, the gentle chivalry of his bearing, a sob rose to her lips, and, for the first time for many weary days, the hot tears rushed to her eyes, and cowering among her pillows she wept like a weary child.

Afterwards she used to say those tears had saved her from madness. Certain it is that when she rose in the morning, although her cheeks were pale and her eyelids suspiciously red, a strange peace was in her heart, and a new softness upon her lovely young face.

She did not catch so much as a glimpse of Owen throughout the next three days. In fact, she did her utmost to avoid him.

But on the morning of the fourth she rose very early to gather some herbs for drying, and while thus engaged she heard a kind voice close by her that sent the blood coursing wildly through her veins.

"You are an early riser, Leah. Was your conscience troublesome, or your dreams unpleasant as mine were?"

She stood in the full glow of the morning sun, her face a little flushed, her eyes troubled. It seemed to Owen she was lovelier than before, despite her poor print gown, and the extreme plainness of her linen collar, unfastened by brooch or ornament.

His eyes fell on the small, slender, but toil-worn hands; then seeing she would not speak, he said,—

"Let me help you, I'm a capital hand at that sort of thing."

"No, no," she answered, hastily, "indeed you must not; Drusilla would be angry."

Drusilla! what a familiar way to speak of her mistress. Owen looked, as he felt, surprised, but Leah was bending over her herbs and did not notice him.

"I must go in; I have gathered quite enough already, and uncle will be waiting for his breakfast."

"So Mr. Darrell is your uncle?" Owen said, calmly; "that explains the likeness between you two." Then seeing how genuinely she was distressed by her own inadvertence, he took her hands in his, saying, "My dear girl, why won't you trust me? Don't you know how deeply I am interested in you?"

But Drusilla's words recurred to her, and breaking away from him, she cried,—

"For shame, sir! to insult a friendless, helpless girl; knowing my wretched story you should have mercy."

"Leah, how unjust you are! Why may I not be your friend?"

"Friend!" bitterly. "I hardly understand what such a thing is."

"Let me teach you," eagerly. "Upon my word you may trust me."

"You forget the difference in our positions."

"There is no difference. What induced you to tell me you were Drusilla's maid?"

"What else am I? The poorest and meanest servant of all work is better off than I, for she works for a wage; whilst I—but why do I speak of these things to you, who cannot understand or care?"

"But indeed I do care more than I can tell," earnestly. "I cannot bear to think of

one so young as you all alone in the world! If only my mother were alive she would have helped you; as it is—well, as it is, Leah, I must have time for thought. By to-morrow I shall have fixed on some plan; you will see me then, will you not? Here, and at the same time?"

"No, no; Drusilla would disapprove of such a meeting, and how do I know I am safe in trusting you?"

He looked hurt by her suspicion.

"I hope I am a gentleman! You need not fear, or if you do, let me speak to Drusilla about you."

She laughed contemptuously.

"Thank you, no, my affairs can have no interest for Miss Darrell. And now, if you please, leave me; it is not well for us to meet. I am grateful to you for your proffered aid and friendship. Heaven knows it is hard to refuse either."

"Then why do it?"

The rich colour flamed into the poor girl's face.

"I cannot tell you," she said under her breath.

"But you must," imperatively. "I will hold you here until you do."

He was so masterful and yet all the while so tender, that Leah felt there was nothing left for her but obedience, and blushing still more furiously, stammered,—

"Friendship between us would mean misery for me. Last night it was said to me, 'If you are wise you will not give him amusement for his leisure hours.'"

"Who said that?" with an ominous flash of the blue eyes.

"I shall not tell you; and you have no right to ask!"

"Yes I have; as my character has been hinted away. Look here, Leah, I know as well as you; it was Drusilla. What the plague makes her so jealous? She ought to know she can trust me. Great Heaven! I am not such a villain as to work any girl harm, especially one so forlorn as you!"

He was so genuinely distressed that with a quick impulse the girl stretched out her hand to him,—

"I do not believe one word of the insinuation; but I do thank you; I shall thank you all my life for your goodness."

"Nonsense! I have done nothing. Leah, isn't it funny that at present I only know you by your Christian name?"

"I am Leah Harwood;" then she added defiantly, "my father is an escaped convict, but Heaven and myself know he is innocent of the crime laid to his charge. Hark! Becky is calling me," and snatching up her basket of herbs she hurried away, leaving Owen no time for further speech.

He stood a few moments where she had left him, looking moodily after her, his brows knitted in a heavy frown; then slowly and deliberately paced the unkempt drive, his mind full of many serious doubts of his betrothed's truth and amiability.

Why had he been so ready to rivet his fetters? He was not at all sure now that he and Drusilla were congenial spirits. He had a vague suspicion that he had made a fool of himself, and thought savagely,—

"I have only seen that girl twice, but upon my soul I am half in love with her already. I'd give a good deal to have the right to comfort her. How lovely she is, and how forlorn! I've seen many women, but none that ever made me feel one spark of—bah! what a fool I am; I'm bound to Drusilla, and have no right to think of—of any other girl."

When he returned to the house Becky met him in the hall, and with a sour glance at him, said,—

"You'll excuse me, sir, when I say Miss Drusilla wouldn't care to know you're flirting with her cousin."

Without a word he passed her by, afraid to trust himself to speech; but the look in his blue eyes was eloquent, and Becky deemed it wisest to say no more.

Sauntering into the breakfast-room he dropped into his seat beside his fiancée, who smiled a welcome; but Owen was in no mood for pleasantries, and astonished all present by asking bluntly,—

"Doesn't your cousin ever put in an appearance, Drusilla?"

"My cousin!" with an air of astonishment. "To whom do you refer?"

"Miss Leah."

"And who told you that any relationship existed between us?"

"Becky."

"She might have been better employed," Mr. Darrell broke in. "By birth and education Leah Harwood is quite unfitted for society. Indeed, it is by her own desire she does not appear. You see, her antecedents are shady; and—and—well, she is sensitive."

"That I can believe; but I am inclined to doubt Harwood's guilt."

"I should be glad to be assured of his innocence; it would take a heavy load from my mind," answered the host; but Owen had very little faith in him; and, alas! he could neither trust nor love his fiancée now.

He spoke no more of Leah then; he saw he was but injuring her cause by his championship, and wisely refrained from further speech on the subject.

But Drusilla's heart was sore with jealousy and suspicion, and she watched both Owen and Leah with unflagging zeal in the days immediately following their second meeting.

Nothing occurring, however, to confirm her suspicions, she began to think she had no real cause for alarm, and relaxed her vigilance. And just when Owen began to fear Leah must have been spirited away he met her in the shrubbery.

She was very pale, and looked as though she had been crying.

In that moment the young man forgot all his good resolves, all his self-control, and, springing forward, caught the little trembling hands in a fervid grasp.

"Leah, what does this mean? What have they been doing to you? Where have you been hiding all these long days? No!" as the girl made an effort to free herself, "you shall not run away! I have got you now, and mean to keep you! Poor little soul! What is the trouble?"

She was trembling as with cold, and dared not look at him.

She had seen him but three times in all, but he had grown to be a hero to her. She had thought of him night and day—far, far more than wise or well, and now he was near courage and control alike forsook her, and she could not trust herself to speak one coherent word.

"What is the matter?" Owen asked, gently. "Tell me all?"

And then, to his dismay, she burst into bitterest tears.

#### CHAPTER IV.

OWEN was beside himself. How should he comfort her, the poor child? How stem the torrent of her tears?

Her distress made him forgetful of all else; and, throwing his arm about her, he drew her to him, and kissed her once upon the mouth.

He certainly chose the most effectual way of calming her, for now she wrenched herself from him, and confronted him with cold, condemning eyes.

"Drusilla was right!" she said. "One in my position could not hope for esteem from one in yours! Good-night, Mr. Emery! I am sorry I ever knew you!"

"Leah, I was a brute! Forgive me! Stop just a moment, and let me explain!" but she was rushing like a whirlwind to the house; and, out of tune with himself and the world, he turned miserably towards the open fields and highway.

Trembling in every limb the girl reached her room, and, falling on her knees beside her bed, sobbed and prayed alternately.



"I cannot, cannot stay here!" she said, "it will break my heart! But, oh, how can I leave him? Shame, thrice shame on me! I love him! I love him! and he cares for me less than nothing! I must get away! but where can I—where shall I go?"

The long hours wore by, and the dusky twilight came on. Her mean little room was now quite dark.

Once or twice Becky called her, but she made no reply. She could not go down yet. So full of the heavy burden of her newly discovered love, she was afraid that all who looked upon her would read her wretched secret.

She heard the dinner-bell ring, and then came Becky's step upon the stairs, and she hastily concealed herself in a small cupboard, holding her breath lest she should be unearthed.

"Drat the girl!" said Becky, "where is she? It ain't like her to be out when there's work to do. She's a good girl, though I ain't going to foster her conceit by telling her so. Leah! Leah! where are you, you lazy, good-for-nothing idler!" and the hurried out, leaving the poor child laughing hysterically.

"She never gave me a word of praise before," she said, as she emerged from her hiding-place; "and I did not believe she could have spoken of me so kindly!"

Poor child! poor child! she was so unused to love and tenderness that even Becky's words fell on her wounded spirit like balm; and as she sat at the open window a gentler mood came upon her, so that she prayed humbly that, if indeed Owen loved her, Heaven in its mercy would teach him to forget, because such love could bring him nothing but misery.

The night wore on, and she heard Becky barring the doors, and inquiring shrilly if anyone had seen Leah.

"Oh, yes!" came the answer in Drusilla's calm tones, "she went to her room more than two hours ago."

"What ailed her that she didn't give me any help? Girls are no good nowadays, either to themselves or to anybody else."

"Perhaps she had a headache," answered the young lady, sweetly. "Good-night, Becky."

Then she went upstairs, and waiting until all was quiet, entered her cousin's room. Leah was still sitting by the window, her face hidden in her arms.

"Light your candle," said Drusilla, in a hard voice. "I want to talk to you, and I can't talk in the dark."

Mechanically the girl obeyed; and by the dim light she saw Drusilla was deadly white, that her eyes burned with unnatural fire; her hands were fast locked, as though she would fain keep under control the passion that was consuming her. Drawing very near to the girl she said, icily,—

"I warned you once it was dangerous to thwart me, or to attempt to win Mr. Emery from me. The time for warning is past now, and I shall act!"

"What do you mean, Drusilla? I am innocent of any offence against you."

"Innocent! when I saw you in his arms submitting to his caresses? You shameless girl, how dare you lie so boldly to me? Would you have me doubt the evidence of my own senses?"

"I would have you trust me more fully," humbly.

"Trust you, a felon's daughter, in whose veins his black blood flows! Trust you! when I know how utterly unprincipled you are! No, Leah Harwood! What I have seen to-day decides your fate. I will not live in the same house with you! I will not lose my lover to you—and so you must go!"

"Go!" the girl echoed in a dazed way. "What do you mean?"

"That you must leave here to-night."

"Without explanation to any? Oh! Cousin Drusilla, you cannot mean so cruel a thing! You will not send me away to-night? It is late, and in all the world I have no friend."

"You should have thought of that before you acted so imprudently. You may appeal to my father if you choose, but you will hardly improve your case. With him my will is law. Put together what things you want and go. Here are ten shillings for you!"

But in a paroxysm of passion Leah struck the hand which held the shining pieces, and they rolled here, there, and everywhere.

"If I must beg it shall not be from you!" she said. "I would die first. Drusilla, you need have no fear of the poor cousin who made sport for your honourable lover. I am going, and neither you nor he will hear of me again."

As she passed out of her room Drusilla sank panting and pale upon the bed, half ashamed and wholly afraid of what she had done.

"Leah!" she called, faintly, but Leah did not reply.

Creeping noiselessly along the corridors she paused outside one door, hearing a voice that had grown all too dear to her. It was Owen, talking earnestly to Ethel Pont's lover.

"I tell you, Tom," he said, "I feel an utter cad. I am engaged to one girl, but—laugh, if you will—I love another with all my soul. I tell you if I were free to-morrow I would marry Leah Harwood if she would have me."

"Oh! thank Heaven, thank Heaven!" cried the poor, bleeding heart. "I can bear anything now, my darling, my darling!"

Then stealing downstairs she slid the bolts noiselessly and passed out into the murky night—penniless and forlorn.

Drusilla saw the light-robed figure as it crossed the lawn, and called softly, "Leah! Leah! come back. I was too harsh," but Leah never heeded, never heard, as she held on her dreary way.

The darkness and solitude frightened her, but she had sufficient courage to press on. Oh! somewhere in the wide world there must be a haven for her; and he loved her! Oh! nothing could take that blessed consolation from her. She could never be wholly wretched knowing that. She said his name to herself over and over again, as if finding comfort in it, and prayed wildly that however rough her own life might be his way might be made smooth.

Stumbling often, faint with fasting and woe, she held on her way, and by dawn was far from The Hermitage.

A woman at a cottage door seeing how faint and weary she was invited her in to rest, and brought her some bread and milk.

"Do you come far?" she said, kindly. "You look worn out!"

"I have been walking all night," Leah answered, in a low, faint voice.

"Dear! dear! that's bad. But what are your friends about to let a young girl like you take the road alone?"

"I have no friends and no home."

"You poor girl!" with genuine sympathy, "and you so young. And what do you mean to do? Where are you going?"

"To Gloucester. Perhaps I shall get work there; and however hard, however poorly paid, I will not complain. Thank you for your kindness. I—I would pay you if I could, but I haven't a penny in the world."

"Don't flash yourself about that. I shan't be the poorer for what you've had. And look here, you just lie down on that couch and try to sleep. My old man's going with a load o' hay ten miles up the road, and he'll give you a lift; he'll be in at twelve. There, I don't want no thanks, and don't you go for to cry." And heedless of all Leah's remonstrances the woman covered her up warmly and left her to sleep if she could.

She was so weary that, despite all her troubles, her friendless and penniless condition, she soon fell into a deep slumber, from which she did not wake until the sound of a bluff, hearty voice broke in upon and disturbed her dreams. Starting up she saw a good-looking man of forty regarding her with pitiful eyes.

"Coom," he said in the broadest dialect,

"coom 'ee here, lass, and get a bite and a soup afore 'ee start, and it's sorry I am we ain't got more to offer 'ee."

Leah rose at his bidding, and the kindness of his voice brought tears to her beautiful eyes.

"I did not think there was so much charity in the world," she said tremulously. "Oh, Heaven bless you both for your great goodness."

The man laid one huge rough hand upon the pretty head with a touch as gentle as a woman's.

"Poor lass! it's a hard life 'ee must ha' had, and it's a precious queer lot o' folks 'ee must ha' knowed, when a wee bit o' kindness stirs 'ee so, and cooms strange to 'ee. But sit 'ee down, and let Lyddy gie 'ee some vittles."

So Leah ate and drank of the humble, plentiful fare, and when she rose to go the good woman wrapped a small shawl about her shoulders, saying it was little she had to give, but such as she had Leah was heartily welcome to; and but for her own numerous children she would have done more. Then she kissed the girl upon the cheek, and the husband made a little hollow in the hay where Leah might lie and rest her aching limbs, and in this fashion they began their journey. They travelled very slowly, and once her companion insisted upon getting down at a wayside inn, and bringing her a glass of ale, which he compelled her to drink, watching with pleased eyes how the colour mounted into her face.

"Don't I know what's good for 'ee?" he asked good-temperedly when she remonstrated. "I ought to, seein' I've got seven young 'uns o' my own; gret strappin' gells and boys they be, too. Now, do 'ee lie down agen, we're most over our journey now; and I'll see 'ee settled for the night afore I leave 'ee, or my name ain't Will Cole."

And he was as good as his word. At the village where he delivered his load of hay he procured a decent lodging for Leah, for which he paid sixpence; and at parting he drew out a shilling, which he offered her shamefacedly.

"Oh, I could not take it, indeed I could not! I owe you so much already."

"The old woman tould me to gie it 'ee, and I ain't goin' agen her; bless 'ee, we've got enough for ourselves, and enough's as good as a feast. Take it, lass, and may 'ee never be hard up for another."

He pressed it into her unwilling palm, and in a sudden passion of gratitude she caught and kissed his horny hand.

The honest fellow wore such a shamed-faced look that a casual observer must have laughed, seeing only the ridiculous side of the matter.

"Lass," he said in his slow way, "what made 'ee go for to do that? 'Ee shouldn't, 'ee shouldn't. It's welcome 'ee are to anythin' I can gie 'ee; and don't be offended if I give 'ee a word o' warnin'. It's a good gell I believe 'ee are, and I'd be sorry to think harm befol 'ee; so lass, let me say, Gloucester's a big place for a lonely young thing, and there's many a critter 'ud think nought o' harmin' 'ee; so don't 'ee be led astray, and think allus o' your mother, and what she'd have 'ee be. Good-bye, my dear, good-bye;" and with that he went lumbering out, leaving Leah in tears. It was wonderful how softened she was by the carter's kindness, how much lighter her heart was, despite her strange condition.

The following morning she started on her journey once more, having breakfasted frugally on a small loaf, and by night she was within six miles of Gloucester. The next day she reached her journey's end, and then began a dreadful search for work; it was strange if in so large a place she should find none. Yet she soon began to fear it was so; everywhere she was met by the question,— "Where are your references?" and having none to offer, being so anxious to hide herself from all who ever knew her, she answered she had none to give, and so each interview ended.

Her money was all gone now, and she would have died rather than beg; so she dragged

herself wearily on, hoping in her inmost heart that Heaven in its mercy would take her to itself, thinking wildly and deliciously of ways and means by which she might escape her wretched lot, sometimes wishing she lay dead beneath the quiet waters.

A rosy school-girl carrying a little bag passed, and seeing how faint and weary she looked, hurriedly thrust the bag into her hand, saying, "Take it, I don't want it; it's only my lunch," and hastened away although ashamed of playing the good Samaritan.

Poor Leah! She ate hungrily of the dainty cake, which scarcely served to appease her appetite, and then she began once more the weary search for employment, with always the same sickening result.

Towards evening heart and brain alike began to fail; she was alone in that great place, faint with fatigue and hunger. In a sudden access of despair she entered the grounds attached to a gentleman's house; surely here she might beg a little of their plenty. How giddy she was, how faint and bewildered; what strange thoughts came to her. Once again she saw Drusilla's cruel, beautiful face; once again she felt Owen's kiss upon her lips, and then with a low, wailing cry she sank in a huddled heap upon the ground.

## CHAPTER V.

MEANWHILE there was much excitement at Thoseldene about Leah's mysterious disappearance, and Drusilla was at a loss to understand her father's extreme agitation.

"Why should you worry about it?" she asked, although, indeed, she herself was pale and nervous. "The girl has gone of her own free will, and for one I am glad."

"I am sorry to hear you say that," said Owen's voice behind her. "I hoped you were more womanly, and it must have been something dreadful to urge her on to such a desperate step."

"Perhaps you accuse me of being concerned in her disappearance?" his fiancée retorted quickly; but he noticed she could not meet his eyes.

"Until a person is convicted he or she is held innocent. I will give you the benefit of the doubt," he answered coldly.

"And pray, sir, what steps do you intend taking in the matter?"

"Of course I wish to find and bring her home, but I cannot indulge in such expense. I am a poor man; that is," seeing Owen's incredulous look, "all I have contrived to save is for Drusilla, but I should be glad to have Leah back."

"And so should I," said Becky, who had been called into the family council. "She was a rare good girl for work, and I tell you there's more than one pair of hands can do here."

"Then why don't you get help from the village?" asked Drusilla.

"Because I don't want the master's affairs to be talked about," grimly, and "there's never a maid would do the work she did."

"Dear me!" remarked Mr. Darrell, "Becky is actually developing some sign of affection. This is wonderful!"

"You may meet as you please sir, but what you say is true. I was always a beast to the poor child, but now she's gone I miss her, and learn her value, and if it's just the same to you, sir, I ain't going to hear her spoke bad of by anybody!"

This was such an unprecedented ebullition that father and daughter stared at the old woman in utter amazement; but Owen seized her hand. "Thank you a thousand times, Becky."

"I'd like to know what you've got to do with the business!" sourly. "It strikes me if it hadn't been for you Leah Harwood wouldn't have gone, and it's certain I am there's more in this than meets the eye."

"What do you mean, Becky?" demanded Drusilla haughtily.

"That's for you to guess, miss. I'm thinking you ain't so innocent as you look," and with that this dreadful old woman bounced from the room, leaving Drusilla covered with confusion, which served to heighten Owen's vague suspicions.

For two or three days advertisements appeared in the leading papers, but when no replies came, Everett Darrell considered he had done his duty and there the matter ended. Owen went to his uncle's, Lord Wolverton, and Drusilla accompanied some friends to Scarborough, feeling that for a little while she and Owen were best apart.

Becky kept house for "the master," and now more than ever the old woman missed the girl she had always flouted and scolded. She wished her back so earnestly that she was ashamed of her own feelings—she who had gone through life without one spark of affection for anybody—to learn at last to care for a poor little wail like Leah. A foundling, brought up in a workhouse where gentleness was unknown, cast upon the world in early life without so much as "Heaven bless you" to speed her on her way, there was little wonder Becky grew hard and cruel in such a house as Everett Darrell's; there was small chance of reformation.

But now Becky, for the first time in her life, felt her heart stirred up by compassion and a strange longing for the sight of a familiar, sad young face, and the sound of a wistful, weary voice.

Drusilla amidst the gaieties of the Scarborough life, forgot, or stifled, her remorse, and gave herself wholly up to the pleasures surrounding her. Her beauty and reputed wealth made her very popular, and she revelled in the flattery of new friends, the ceaseless round of amusements, until Leah's lovely, tortured face haunted her no more.

And in September she wrote to Owen, requesting him to run down to Scarborough at his earliest convenience, as she had something of importance to communicate.

Full of hope that Leah was discovered, he hastened to obey her summons, and found his fiancée sitting, perfectly dressed, perfectly composed, awaiting his arrival.

"You have heard of, or from Leah?" he questioned eagerly.

"Indeed no; I think we never shall again. But won't you sit down? I have something to tell you which will alter the old tenor of our lives. Owen, I don't think you are very passionately devoted to me," and she glanced covertly at him.

He made no answer, but grew red with his embarrassment.

Drusilla only laughed.

"It is generally the poor woman who has to take the bull by the horns, and so I must perform my part. From the time you first saw Leah you changed, oh! it is useless to deny it, and I am not the sort of woman to share a divided empire, and so I have sent for you to say I think it best our engagement should be ended."

"With all my heart; that is, I mean, I am agreeable to meet you in every way."

"You are too kind," sincerely stung by his ready acquiescence; but the fact is we both made a mistake. You preferred the shield of a common criminal to me, and I have learned to care for an honorable gentleman, whose wife I hope soon to be. If you are generous you will give me my freedom."

"It is yours unconditionally," he answered, so cheerfully that Drusilla could have struck him. "What a good thing we found out our mistake in time!"

"Yes," she said, smothering her wrath; "we should have been unhappy."

"I believe you! Well, you will let me wish you all happiness now, and the gentleman too. Of course," with a twinkle in his eyes, "of course he is not a commoner. Like myself?"

"He is the Honourable Charles Leon."

"My dear Drusilla, how much to be envied you are! Why, bless my soul, he is the most manageable young fellow I know!"

He could not have helped that thrust for the life of him.

Vaguely he felt Drusilla knew more than she would tell of Leah's disappearance, and he was not at all sorry to punish her for any share she might have had in it.

But the young lady's face flashed angrily.

"You are pleased to be facetious, Mr. Emery, although, indeed, I see small occasion for mirth. And I have such faith in Charles, that I am convinced he will be loyal to me, however charming my maid may be."

"I am sure I hope he will. I should be sorry to learn you had been disappointed in him. And now I suppose I may consider our interview ended? Thank you, and pray accept my hearty congratulations upon this fortunate event. Good-bye, Drusilla! I hope you will be happier than your cousin."

Free now to woo the woman he loved, Owen began his search for her in a hopeful frame of mind; but on every hand dangers and difficulties beset him, and it was not long before hope and courage alike began to fail him.

In the meantime Leah had been tenderly cared for.

A servant had found her lying prone upon the ground, and, knowing his mistress's generous nature, had called her to his assistance.

Mrs. Cunningham at once ordered the poor child to be carried into the house; and there, after a prolonged swoon, the dark eyes gradually opened, the sweet lips quivered, and faint words were spoken; but Mrs. Cunningham said quickly,—

"Hush, you must not talk now. Rest awhile; and after dinner, if you are able, you shall tell me your story," and Leah was too weak to disobey.

Soft-footed, soft-voiced servants came and went, ministering to her wants, until the white lids closed in a deep and peaceful sleep, which lasted for hours.

When she woke again Mrs. Cunningham was sitting beside her, and to her the girl confided all that was necessary of her pitiful story.

When she had ended the lady sat thoughtful and silent a little while, then she said,—

"I think I may trust you, Leah; your face pleads for you, and if you care to accept the situation, I very greatly need a sewing-maid. With so many little ones, there is always something to do."

And so at last poor Leah found work and a home.

She was not altogether unhappy. Her mistress was kind and considerate; her fellow-servants pleasant and companionable, but yet her sick heart yearned day by day for the sight of Owen's honest face, the loving regard of his blue eyes.

And whilst she thought of these things, and pined for love, as sick men pine for their native air, great changes had taken place amongst those she had known and cared for.

By a series of calamities Owen found himself Lord Wolverton.

His uncle had died of a virulent fever, and his two cousins had been drowned whilst yachting off the Hebrides, so that he found himself the owner of large and unencumbered estates, the possessor of a title and great riches.

Drusilla Darrell would have given a great deal then to recall her hasty words, to blot out that one morning at Scarborough from Owen's mind and her own alike.

"Snatching at the shadow, I have lost the substance," she said, bitterly; "and it is only my prospective fortune that has bought me a title. But for that miserable little Leah I should have been Lady Wolverton now!"

But regrets were unavailing, so she applied herself with redoubled energy to the completion of her toilette, and found some comfort in the piles of laces and ribbons, the dainty gowns, and ornaments her father lavished upon her; but she would have given worlds, did she possess them, once again to have Owen at her feet.



The wedding had been fixed for November, and the weeks seemed to fly, so busy they were.

Then, as the eventful day drew near, Drusilla said to her father,—

"I really think we ought to invite Lord Wolverton. It would give prestige to the ceremony, and show the world that we are still friends."

"As you please, Dr. I am afraid, my dear, you played your cards very badly; but that cannot be helped now. And I always liked Emery—I mean Wolverton; so write him a friendly little note. By Jove! it would be strange if a change were effected in the bridegroom!"

"That will never be. Owen is too much in love with Leah; but I will write the note. He cannot do worse than decline."

And that was just what Lord Wolverton did not do.

He sent a friendly reply, in which he said he should be happy to see Thomselden again; and two days before the wedding took place he arrived at The Hermitage.

He came partly to show that no animosity existed between himself and Drusilla, and partly because he hoped to hear something of Leah.

But all his questionings were in vain.

Becky could tell him nothing; and, beyond the fact that the girl had been seen on the high-road to Gloucester, nothing was known of her.

Owen began to fear that in a paroxysm of despair she had taken her own life.

"And if it is so," he thought, "then it is all over with me, and my freedom is comparatively worthless!"

Drusilla was very gracious to him, but she was too wise to attempt his subjugation, knowing how vain that would be; and but for his anxiety concerning Leah the time would have passed pleasantly enough.

The wedding took place with great *clat*, Owen being "best man," and performing his part well. His present to the bride was a costly pearl necklace, which well became her imperial beauty, and made her regret more than ever her rash rejection of him.

Mr. Darrell pleaded with Owen to stay with him awhile, as the house would be so lonely when Drusilla was gone, and having no prior engagement he agreed to do so.

Everett Darrell was not the best of hosts, and it was not long before Owen regretted his promise, and wished himself well away.

One day, when he sat yawning over a novel, he chanced to look up, and saw Darrell looking with seared eyes at a certain paragraph in his paper. Before the young man could remark on his evident agitation he flung it down and hurried from the room, keeping his face steadily averted all the while.

When the door closed upon him Owen stooped and picked up the paper.

"I wonder now what it is that has so upset him; perhaps it is news of Leah," and he hurriedly ran his finger down the columns, until he came to this:—

"The great German-Harwood forgery case can hardly yet have passed from public memory, although it is now fifteen years since Harold Harwood was sentenced to ten years' penal servitude."

"He all along protested his innocence, but proofs seemed too strong for him, and being condemned he was conveyed to Portland, from which place he subsequently escaped, to be heard of no more."

"It now transpires that he suffered most unjustly, the real criminal being Ellis Germain, eldest son of the prosecutor, who now lies at the point of death, and has made a full and free confession of his guilt."

"Poor fellow!" Owen said, aloud. "So he was innocent after all, and there is no stain upon her name! I wonder if he is alive! If so, where has he hidden himself, and why has he never written to his daughter? And what the plague did Darrell mean by looking so seared? Any other man would have been glad. It

strikes me there's something shady about it; I wish I could find out."

He sat lost in his reverie, when the door opened and his host re-entered. He was very white and nervous, and when Owen, pointing to the paragraph, said,—

"You must be glad to learn this," he started, flushed, and pouring out a tumbler of brandy, drained it to the dregs before answering.

## CHAPTER VI.

"Yes, yes; of course I am delighted," he said, at last, but tone and look belied his words. "You see, Wolverton, it's just this: as soon as Harwood knows his innocence is established he will make tracks for England, and naturally come on here to see his daughter. Well, what am I to do? He'll never believe that I am blameless of her disappearance! What on earth shall I say?"

"Why," answered Owen, giving vent to his long restrained resentment, "tell him the truth. Say she was hangered and baited, made the drudge and victim of the whole household; that she was meanly clothed and badly fed; that she never had a kind word or loving look from one around her, and at last, made desperate by such vile treatment, she escaped, and in all probability put an end to the life you had all conspired to make a misery."

"Well!" ejaculated Darrell, sinking into a chair, and regarding Owen with unmitigated astonishment, "do you know—do you know that your lordship's words are actionable?"

"I neither know nor care; but if you can deny one accusation I have brought against you, you are welcome to try. Upon my soul I believe there is more in this than meets the eye."

"What—what do you mean?" stammered Darrell. "You are very violent and unjust. Wouldn't the girl have been homeless but for me?"

"Wasn't she cheaper than any hired servant?" passionately. "Her work was never done, and her wages took the form of abuse and contempt!"

"I was never unkind to her," Darrell almost whined.

"You certainly stopped short of beating her," grimly. "I don't think you dared have gone so far—the worm might have turned."

Darrell started to his feet.

"Look here, Wolverton, you don't know all the facts of the case, how trying she was, and all that sort of thing. Of course you think her an angel, and you're welcome to your belief; but if you stay a moment you will see that by breaking with me you will injure Leah. She must be found, and couldn't we work better together than separately?"

Owen was silent a moment; the idea of working with Darrell was not pleasant. The man's presence was rapidly becoming intolerable to him, but for Leah's sake he could bear any personal discomfort; so after a pause he said,—

"I agree!" Then, with sly humour in his eyes, "each one to be his own paymaster."

"Oh, yes, yes, certainly," answered the other, rather crestfallen. He had counted upon the young lord's proverbial generosity to reduce his expenses at least one-half.

But Owen knew Darrell's ingrained miserliness, what pain and grief it was to him to part with any of his hoardings, and he fully intended that he should suffer in that respect to the fullest.

"It will be paying off old scores," he thought, with a half laugh. "My poor Leah! my poor darling! You shall not always be unavenged."

By night they were ready to start on their journey, and Becky waiting in the hall to say a few parting words to Owen.

"You are going to find her?" she asked, in an eager whisper.

"I hope so," gravely.

"You'll be successful," confidently; "you

love her, and when you've found her will you say how much I missed her, how I never knew her value till she was gone, and how sorry I am now that I treated her so ill—but harshness had made me hard too. Heavens! my life ain't been all honey," and then she stopped as if ashamed of her outburst.

"I will tell her all you say, and all I think you mean, Becky."

"Thank you, my lord. But here's master. Don't let on to him what I've told you, or he'll think I'm gone childish," and she began assiduously to dust some chairs with her apron.

"Be as careful as you can, Becky; and if you're nervous Topham can come to sleep in the house."

"Nervous at my time of day?" the old woman retorted. "No one will harm me, and burglars have got too much sense to come to a place like this. There wouldn't be anything for them if they did—you take care of that!"

"Don't be insolent," frowning at her, but she remained utterly unabashed. "And please remember my instructions. If any letters should arrive for me you must forward them at once to the addresses I shall send you from time to time. Don't forget!"

"It ain't likely I shall, considering I shan't have anything else to think of," and that was their characteristic parting.

Darrell and Lord Wolverton went first to Birmingham, from which place they believed they had received tidings of Leah.

But they were doomed to disappointment, and indeed it seemed as though success would never crown their efforts.

From town to town they journeyed, Darrell groaning inwardly over the expenditure, and Owen sticking fast to his bargain, out of sheer maliciousness; and at the end of five months they found themselves in London.

As they sat over the walnuts and wine that evening the elder man said,—

"If this one proves a false one I shall give up the search. Already it has cost me more than I can well afford. I've heard nothing from Harwood, and it leads to nothing."

"Of course you will please yourself, Darrell. But, you see, you are responsible for your niece's safety."

"I was not her appointed guardian. Heaven was that. I only took her out of charity."

"And charity covers a multitude of sins," sneered Owen. "Her father should be grateful to you—but I dare say he won't. Gratitude is a mighty scarce virtue in the nineteenth century."

"You are right, Wolverton. No one knows that so well as I. There's Ison! I'm sure Drusilla's settlements were very generous; but he is like the horse-leech's daughter, always crying 'give, give!' and between him and this search I shall be utterly ruined. Think what that means for a man of my age."

Before Owen could reply a waiter appeared.

"There's a gentleman below, sir," he said to Darrell, "asking to see you; but he will not give his name. He says his business is urgent."

"Show him up. Wolverton, you need not go; I dare say it is some missionary or insurance agent—they're up to all sorts of dodges."

A quick, firm step sounded on the stairs, and in another moment a tall, muscular-looking man stood in the doorway.

Despite the grey hairs about the temples, the lines of care and sorrow on his face, and the heavy black beard he wore, there was yet sufficient resemblance between him and Leah to startle Owen; and whilst he wondered who he was, Darrell turned languidly, and lifting his eyes to the stranger's level, gave a hoarse cry, and put up his hands as though to ward him off.

The other advanced quickly. "Where is my daughter?" he asked in a low, intense tone, full of threatening. "Give her back to me, you villain, or I'll strangle the life out of your body!"

"Harwood! Harwood! where do you come from?" gasped Darrell. "I—we—did not know you were in England!"

"I don't suppose you did, and very sorry you are to see me. What account can you give of your stewardship? and where is she for whom you professed so much tender care? Give me back my child!" and here the strong voice broke. "By Heaven, if she is dead I will stick at nothing to avenge her!"

"Harwood, I was as a father to her; but she was wilful in the extreme, and having had a quarrel with her lover she ran away. Even now I am searching for her."

"Because you feared my return when my innocence was established, and dreaded exposure! I have been to Thoseldean, and whilst there was not idle. The result of my inquiries was not such as to redound to your credit."

"I have many enemies, brother Harwood!" cringing, "but ask Becky if Leah and I were not as father and child."

"You miserable, cowardly liar!" broke in Owen; "she hated and feared you, as indeed she had reason to do."

"Who are you, sir?" asked Harwood, wheeling round.

"Owen Emery, Lord Wolverton, and your daughter's lover!"

"Being her lover, why did you not rescue her from her misery?"

"I was not a free man then, and her flight was too sudden—too unexpected for me to prevent it. But, sir, I have searched for her unceasingly. I have hoped against hope, and if at last I learn I have lost her, well—" he broke off hurriedly, and Harwood clasped his hand.

"She cannot be lost to us," he said, hoarsely. "Heaven! have I hungered so long for a sight of her face to be cheated at the last?"

Then remembering Darrell's presence, he drew himself erect.

"As for you, it is in my heart to punish you as you deserve. All is known to me—your duplicity, your systematic robbery. Judge between us," addressing Owen, whilst Darrell shrank lower in his chair, and covered his eyes with his trembling hands. "See what manner of man he is, and how basely he has betrayed me and mine! When I was sentenced to penal servitude I begged him to befriend my wife and child—my wife was his own sister."

"She had a little property, and on this contrived to exist for a year or two. That being gone he—Everett Darrell—doled her out a scanty pittance in return for the care and instruction she gave his daughter. You see I have learned everything."

"But when he heard of my escape from Portland, and knew I dared not set a foot in England, being once quit of it, he showed himself in his true colours."

"He utterly cast them off, and but for the charity of an old and valued friend they must have starved."

"I went to Australia, from which place I wrote him, and begged news of my wife and child—prayed him, too, to keep my hiding-place a secret from all but Leah's mother."

"What did he do? He kept all knowledge from her, and the suspense and anxiety concerning me killed her!"

Here he glanced so vindictively at Darrell that Owen made a forward step as though to stand between them.

"Don't be afraid!" Harwood said quickly. "I shall not strike him. Well, my wife being dead, Manser kept the child, loving her as his own; but that thief there wrote me she was safe in his care, the darling plaything and companion of his own daughter."

"I was at the mines then, and I scraped and saved like the veriest miser to repay him for his goodness, and make a suitable allowance my child."

"All through those months and years I cheered myself with the thought that she was happy—that her love for me grew with her growth."

"Toil grew pleasure, and my own poverty was light, when I thought that every fresh re-

mittance I made procured her some new pleasure. Then, when she was old enough to write, I begged Darrell to enclose me a letter from her."

"At first he refused to do so, saying that she was too young yet to be entrusted with the secret he held, and begging me to be patient. Oh, Heaven! it was hard, and yet I was patient; and after a year or two I wrote Leah, telling Darrell I could no longer keep silence."

"A letter came then from her—so I thought—but now I know it was a forgery, that no line from her has ever reached me; that year after year he has grown rich on my labour; that his child has lived in luxury whilst mine was grudging the common necessities of life—he was scoffed at—despised; the servant of servants, more to be pitied than the meanest pauper in the land. Wretch!" bringing his fist heavily down upon the table. "Out of my sight, or I shall murder you!"

Darrell started to his feet.

"Hear me, let me justify myself; let me offer my defence!"

"I'll not hear one word!" violently. "I dare not trust myself to listen! Look at him! look at him, I say! Whilst I have been imprisoned, exiled—have worked early and late, have fared hard (that all should be well with her)—he has posed as a moral man, has won respect by reason of riches, and his supposed integrity. Fifteen years of misery were given me—an innocent man! and all his life has been smooth—a series of unsuccesses. Oh, Heaven! is this justice?"

"Just a moment! Wolverton, beg him to hear me, and grant my petition. It is not for myself I plead, but for my daughter. Think what the exposure of my—my faults would mean for her! She occupies a high position."

"Hear him!" cried Harwood; "he dares to plead for his child when he has sent mine adrift! I need not to be hard, but when I remember all, every feeling of tenderness or compassion leaves me. I can't be merciful, and, as sure as there is a Heaven above us, unless Leah is restored to me by the close of the year I will have my 'pound of flesh!' I will spare no one concerned in this wretched business. Mind you, Darrell, you are not to relax your search because of my return; your own safety depends on your vigilance."

"Wolverton can answer for me," began Darrell, hastily; but the young lord turned on his heel, saying, curtly,—

"I have nothing to do with you!" and so moved to the door.

"Where are you going? Remember, this search was a joint affair."

"It is so no longer," coldly. "I don't consort with thieves!" and he marched out of the room with head erect.

Harold Harwood followed him.

"Where are you going?"

"To the Langham. I'll leave word for my traps to be forwarded. You don't suppose I can breathe in that brute's company. By Jove! my fingers itch to knock him down!"

"The quarrel is mine at present," sternly. "Have you any objection to my company? No? Thank you. Then suppose we put up together. I shall be glad of your society."

"How did you know your innocence was established?" asked Owen, bluntly. "I suppose that is what brought you back?"

"Yes. I had made a very lucky hit, by which I am now a rich man; and business took me to Melbourne, where an English newspaper fell into my hands. There I read the story, and knew my long exile was over, and started at once for home, to find—to find—oh! Heaven! it is too much!" and the strong man trembled like a child; his voice shook and faltered, then died utterly out, as he thought of all poor Leah had endured.

## CHAPTER VII.

The next morning Mr. Harwood announced his intention of going down to the Honourable Charles Ison's seat, which was situated in a

remote part of Carnarvonshire; and begged Owen to accompany him.

"I fancy," he said, "I can learn something from Drusilla. The girl can't be as hardened as her father. You will, of course, come with me, as we have a common interest?"

"You must excuse me," said Owen, awkwardly. "The fact is, I was once engaged to Mrs. Ison; and—and—well, I couldn't do it."

"And she jilted you for an impecunious 'Honourable'?" Come, there must be something good in the girl to prefer love to wealth."

Owen laughed.

"Oh, I wasn't Lord Wolverton when our engagement was cemented; but only a private gentleman, of not too large means. You see, Drusilla wanted a title, and there seemed not the remotest chance of my succeeding to one—there were three lives between me and the title then. So she jilted me in favour of her husband, and I—well, it doesn't redound to my credit perhaps—but I was awfully glad to be free; because I had then seen and learned to love Leah. Now, you must feel, I could not even seem to hound Drusilla down, so you will have to go alone. I shall wait here for you, and in the meantime we ought to advertise for Leah. How would this do?"

"If this should meet the eye of Leah Harwood, late of Thoseldean, will she communicate with her father at the Langham, or forward her address to him? Everything can be satisfactorily explained."

"You won't improve on that. We will send it at once, and I shall start for Carnarvonshire to-morrow. I wish you were coming, but I quite see that it is impossible. Well, I shall be back the following day at the latest, and unless anything of importance transpires you will remain here?"

"Oh, certainly. Perhaps we shall get an answer to our advertisement. I had almost given up hope, but your coming has given me fresh courage—and—and—don't think me a fool, but I should be glad to know you will not drop down too heavily upon Drusilla. Remember, she was once to have been my wife, and then her training was bad."

"I shall not exceed the limits of justice," grimly, and that was all he would say.

The next morning he started for Llanfrellyn, determined in some way to learn the truth about Leah's flight.

It was a long and wearisome journey, but he accomplished it at last, and hiring a queer little conveyance at the very primitive station, was driven to Ison House by a very bucolic Welshman.

Mrs. Ison was in, and was graciously pleased to receive him, (he had purposely refrained from sending in his card), only requesting Drusilla would grant an old friend an audience.

As he entered her reception room she rose from an easy-chair, looking so beautiful, so womanly, he could scarcely believe her guilty of cruelty or treachery; but he remembered that appearances are deceitful, and stole his heart against her.

"I am Harold Harwood," he said, with great abruptness, and he saw a crimson flush mount her face, then die away, leaving her very pale.

To him these were signs and seal of her guilt; but she quickly recovered herself, and extending a white be-jewelled hand, said,—

"My dear uncle, what a pleasure it is to see you, what happiness to know your honour is vindicated, as I always said it would be. Please accept my heartiest congratulations," and she lifted her perfect face to his.

But he would not kiss the dainty lips, he would not even touch her hand, only he looked sternly into her dark eyes and said,—

"Drusilla, you must tell me why your cousin ran away from Thoseldean."

"I—I really cannot, uncle. It is all a mystery. Some say she did not go alone—that she had a lover—"

"Stop, you must not go too far, girl! Remember you speak of my child—"



"I do remember, or I should have spoken more plainly."

"Do you mean to say that Leah was a disgrace to her name?" Harwood demanded. "Is it rather you who have degraded your family by sending her adrift upon the world?"

It was only a chance shot, but it told. Drusilla sank down upon a chair white as death.

"Who blames me for her disappearance?" she gasped, and he was quick to see and follow up his advantage.

"I do, and I can bring it home to you," boldly. "For your father's sake and your own you had better tell the whole truth. It is your only chance! Trouble has not made me gentler or more generous, and I swear unless this matter is cleared up your father shall stand where I once stood—in a felon's dock!"

"What do you mean?" she asked, thrown utterly off her balance, and losing all self-control. "What has he done?"

Then bluntly and unsparingly Harold Harwood told the whole story of Darrell's deceit and embezzlement, and Drusilla listened with such growing shame and horror that it was very easy to see that in this thing she was utterly and entirely ignorant.

Vain, selfish, and ambitious as she was, she dearly loved her father, and not even his sin could shake her love. She fell on her knees, there before Harwood, pleading him to spare him, crying he was an old man and could not bear his punishment, that she would do anything to save him.

"Get up!" said Harwood, sternly. "I want deeds, not words! There is only one way by which you can save Everett Darrell and keep your own name out of this scandal. You must tell me the whole truth, or, by Heaven, I'll perform my threat!"

And then, little by little, he drew the shameful, sorrowful story from her, and he could have cursed her where she stood; but she was a woman, and young, and he could not wage war with her; only his parting words dwelt in her mind for many a long week, and she shivered when she thought of the look in his eyes, on his worn and handsome face.

He left Llanfrellyn at once and returned to London, where Owen anxiously awaited him. Then once more the quest began.

In the meanwhile Leah had learned through the papers that her father's honour was vindicated, and a strong throbbing of joy filled all her being. She was no felon's child; the man her mother had so deeply loved had been worthy even her; and she hated herself that she ever could have doubted him even for a moment.

She went to Mrs. Cunningham, and confided all that painful part of her story she had so sedulously suppressed, and that lady was deeply concerned to think of what her present position must be to one so gently born, if not gently nurtured.

"Leah," she said, "we must try to learn something of your father. If he returns you must be where he can find you; but at present I hardly see what you can do. Still, in any case, we must find you more congenial work, and in the meantime I should wish you to take a holiday. You are not looking well, and it really would be best to break utterly and entirely away from your present surroundings. Is there nowhere you could go?"

"I believe Mr. and Mrs. Cole would be glad to have me."

"Write and ask, and, understand, I shall defray all expenses."

So Leah wrote to the Coles, who professed themselves not only willing but glad to receive her, and said honestly enough they would prefer she should come as a guest and not a lodger, but if that could not be, they must agree, (unwillingly), to her terms.

In a day or two she was quite settled, and the fresh country air fanned her cheeks into the most delicate pink, brought a new light into her eyes, so that her beauty took even casual observers by storm.

The kindness of the honest couple, the genuine liking the children developed for her,

were very new and grateful to the girl, and she began to indulge in pretty mischievous ways and words, which added not a little to her popularity.

She had been a fortnight in this quiet retreat, when she received a letter from Mrs. Cunningham, which made her pale with excitement, and so tremulous that she caught at the table to steady herself.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" cried Mrs. Cole, alarmed by such signs, "don't say you've got bad news, dear; now, don't go for to say it!"

"No, no; such good, such blessed news that I cannot think them true!" and with that she flung her arms about the good woman's neck, and wept unrestrainedly on her breast.

Lyddy was far too wise and motherly to check the outburst, and waited until it was spent, contenting herself with gently stroking the beautiful hair, with a touch as light as the feel of a feather.

With a strong effort the girl presently recovered herself, and bidding Lyddy read it, gave it into her hand.

"May my old man hear it?" questioned the woman. "He'll be main glad to know your luck's got a turn," and as Leah granted a ready consent, Will was called in.

He waited attentively for Lyddy to begin, with such an air of pride in her scholarship, he could neither read nor write, that in the midst of her tremulous joy Leah could scarcely refrain from bursting into laughter.

"MY DEAR LEAH,—At last your troubles are ended, and a bright day has dawned for you. Two days since I saw an advertisement in a daily which requested you to communicate with your father; and feeling that delay might be dangerous, I at once telegraphed to the given address, with the result that your father answered in person—he has but just left me. Think of that, Leah, *your own father*, and a parent any girl should be proud of.

"He knows the real story of your flight, all the shame and pain you have endured, and he knows still more; but there, I will say nothing, leaving all for him to tell.

"You may expect him now at any hour. I would have written you to come on here, but he was so anxious to see and thank these worthy people who have been so kind to you. What a happy girl you will be—the only and idolised child of a rich and generous man; by the way, my dear, I know now from whom you derived your good looks. And now, good-bye, and be sure you make yourself look your prettiest.—Always your friend, "A. C."

What hearty congratulations followed upon Lyddy's reading, how everybody rejoiced in Leah's fortune, how fondly the good woman kissed her, and the honest carter patted her hands, her shoulders, her pretty hair; doing everything, in short, except following his wife's example.

And then the excitement that followed, when Lyddy and her eldest girl bustled about, straightening and dusting the best room, which already was so spotless and prim.

And Leah must do nothing but "run up to her own little chamber, and put on that pretty red frock her clever fingers had made."

She was trembling and tearful still, and, perhaps hoping to win some semblance of composure, she knelt down beside her bed, and lifted up her whole heart in thanksgiving.

When she rose she was very pale, but the sweet mouth had grown firmer, the beautiful eyes were calmer, clearer.

And whilst she lingered in her room she heard a sudden sound of excited voices, followed by a lull; and, sick and faint, she sat down, her hands pressed tightly over her beating heart.

Next a voice called, "Miss Leah, come down!" and, hardly knowing what she did, she obeyed.

"He's in there," said Lyddy, half laughing, half crying, and pushed the pale girl towards the best room. "Your own dear father, miss!"

Face to face they stood; and Harold Harwood was not less moved than his child.

At first he could not speak, he only stretched out his arms to her; and, without a word, she ran to him, to find herself sheltered and safe in his love.

What broken words of tenderness and thanks followed upon that first embrace! How much there was to hear and tell!

Was ever a girl so happy before? Was ever a daughter so beautiful and dear?

They would have been content to sit there through all the long hours of the day; only at last the father remembered that some one who had long loved his child was waiting with burning impatience to have and to hold her.

"Did you know Drusilla was married?" he questioned, abruptly.

He felt a slight shiver run through the slender form.

"To—Mr. Emery, of course?"

"No; wrong for once, my dear! She jilted him for another. Why do you look so relieved? Ah, Leah! Leah! you haven't a secret from me, and I know I have found you only to lose you again. I have met *him*, dear! He was searching for you, and lately we have searched together. I have been selfish, so long to keep him waiting. Leah, you are trembling again! This will never do!" and, opening the door, he called to some one to come in, at the same time making good his escape.

And when Leah dared to look up she saw that dear, honest face, those kindly, loyal eyes, that in all, through all, she had remembered and loved, and a little sob rose to her lips.

Oh! this joy was too great! too great! her heart was like to burst!

"Won't you speak to me, dear!" the young man said, unsteadily; and then, like a child, obeying, she breathed his name, so soft, so low, that it was scarcely a whisper that reached him.

But it was enough for him. The next moment she was folded in his arms, kissed again and again with such wild fervour that it took her breath away.

"Sweetheart! sweetheart! let me hear you say you love me!" he pleaded; "you have never said it yet. The only time I did *this*, (stooping to kiss her), again you were angry."

"You belonged to Drusilla, then; and I thought you were making sport of me. But now I am wiser; and—and—"

"And what?" he demanded, as she paused confusedly.

"You will never leave me? It would break my heart to lose you now!"

"You can only do that now by death, my darling!"

How surprised she was when she learned the change in his fortune, how much afraid she should be found all unfit for the position to which he would lift her; and how he laughed at her fears.

Surely there never was such a dinner as that which Lyddy provided, although, indeed, Leah's appetite had forsaken her; but Owen had insisted that the carter and his wife should sit down with them; and, when they had overcome their awe of such high company, they laughed and jested with such real hearty enjoyment that Owen declared it was a treat to see and hear them.

Nor was that the ending of their good times, rather it was the beginning; for sure Mr. Harwood never forgot their goodness to his child, or that the Coles ever had reason to repent their charity, and Will's horse and cart testify to their prosperity.

The girls have found service with Lady Wolverton; the boys have each been given a trade, and Lyddy can never speak of her generous friends without tears rising to her eyes.

Even Becky received a handsome present, with a kindly note, over which Everett Darrell glowered viciously, and, whilst Drusilla reigns a queen in society, but a loveless wife and careless mother, Leah finds her best happiness in her home, surrounded by her children, the idolised darling of husband and father!

[THE END.]

## FACETIE.

A WOMAN preacher is like a dog walking on his hind legs. It is not well done, but you are surprised to find it done at all.

It is queer that a young man never notices that a woman he is in love with has freckles until after she has tilted or married him.

Mrs. A.: "Your husband kissed me this morning." Mrs. B.: "He is incorrigible, and his bad taste, I fear, I can never change."

"TAKE it twice during the night, if you wake up," said an unprofessional nurse, as she left a bowl of gruel by a patient's bedside, "and once if you don't."

GERMAN Professor (to young American): "You don't must make yourself drouble to speak Cherman by me; when you speak English I know your meanness ferry well."

MISS DE FASHION: "Did you have a pleasant time this summer?" Miss De Style: "Perfectly lovely. We moved around so much I didn't have to be seen in the same dress twice."

A WOMAN returning to Paris from the middle of France was asked how she liked the Pyrenees. "I hardly know," she replied, "the country was so mountainous I could hardly see them."

SOMETHING NEW IN BRIC-A-BRAC.—Ethel: "Oh, I saw such a sweet match safe this afternoon." George: "What shape was it in?" Ethel: "It was in the shape of a marriage certificate."

"You must come and see me, my dear," said a lady to a little girl of her acquaintance. "Do you know my number?" "Oh, yes," responded the child: "papa says you always live at sixes and sevens."

"AND pray, why don't you put new buttons on my shirts?" asked a Bohemian, of his washerwoman. Washerwoman: "Shure, air, because it's meeself was thinkin' y'd be after needin' new shirts on the buttons."

NO FIREWORKS.—Ella: "Well, Ada is to be married next week. I understand it is to be a very quiet wedding." Bella (who abhors the bridegroom): "I should think that they would want to keep it as quiet as possible."

SHE (ardently): "And you really think you love me? Now, from the bottom of your heart, tell me, do you really know what love is? He: "I should just think I do! Why, I have been engaged to three girls already."

WIFE: "John, love, I read one of your sweet love letters to-day, and came across a passage in which you said 'there is no one your equal in this wide, wide world.' Husband (with a groan): "And I am still of the same opinion."

DUDE: "Are you waiting for somebody, miss?" Lady: "Yes, I expect to meet my husband here." Dude: "I didn't know you were married." Lady: "Of course I ain't. Didn't I tell you I expected to meet my husband here?"

HIS BIRTHDAY, TOO.—Augustus (no longer the young): "Well, there's one comfort; they say at forty a man is either a fool or a physician." Angelina (nearly swallowing a yawn): "And are you a physician, then?" Augustus: "No." Angelina: "Oh!"

MISTRESS (returned from her summer vacation, to her cook): "I hear that you have been entertaining your soldier lover here. Didn't I forbid your entertaining company in the kitchen during my absence?" Cook: "Yes, madam, but I took him to the parlour."

DECTON, passing a stonecutter's yard: "Good morning, Mr. Jones. Hard at work, I see. I suppose you finish your gravestones as far as 'In Memory of,' and then wait for some one to die, eh?" "Why, yes; unless somebody's sick and you're doctoring 'em; then I keep right on."

SQUIRE: "I heard your wife was pretty sick last week, deacon, but I hope she's mending rapidly now." Deacon: "Yes, thankee, she's ketchin' up with her mendin' now; set up till twelve o'clock last night 'n' darned a pile o' stockin's two feet high. She kin mend pretty fast when she gets agoin'."

SHE (after the "yes"): "But this beautiful solitaire is too large." He (adjusting an invisible spring with the deftness of long practice): "Oh, pardon me, my darling. Your sweet little finger is so much smaller. There now, it is a perfect fit, isn't it?" She (dubiously): "Y—e—s."

HUSBAND (alarmed): "Emily, there seems to be a smoke coming up through the floor. Run and tell the lady on the flat below, something's a-fire in her part of this building. Quick, quick!" Wife (cold and stately): "Cyrus, I'll never do it in the world. We've lived three months in this flat, and she has never called on me."

"THIS world is pretty evenly divided, after all," said the butcher, as he scraped away at his block. "How?" "Lady in the diamonds and sealskin gets out of her carriage, and comes in here and inquires for 'sausage.' "Well?" "Well, other folks have the money, and us butchers have the education. Makes me feel more content."

"WHAT's the trouble with you?" asked the doctor. "Insomnia," replied the patient. Doctor: "Can't sleep, eh?" Patient: "Not for hours a night." Doctor: "Ever tried anything?" Patient: "Tried everything; all no good." Doctor: "Ever try anything to keep awake?" Patient sees hope for himself in an experiment that was never known to fail.

"THERE's a sad case," said old Mrs. Squaggs, as she laid the paper on her knees and wiped her spectacles; "a bride struck dumb after leaving the altar, and at last accounts she hadn't recovered her speech." "It's the way of the world, my dear," said old Mr. Squaggs, with a sigh—"it's the way of the world. Some men have all the luck."

A GENTLEMAN who had been dining out the night before went into a barber's shop one morning to be shaved. He saw that the barber had been taking more than was good for him, for his hand shook very much, and, naturally indignant, he began to give him a little moral advice by saying, "Bad thing, drink!" "Yes," said the barber, "it makes the skin unco' tender."

"I DECLARE," said Mrs. Sharpleigh, turning from her mirror; "I look like a perfect fright in this horrid bonnet, don't I?" "Yes, my dear," replied her husband, abstractedly, without looking up from his paper, "you do." Sharpleigh: "You're a brute! The bonnet is the most becoming I ever wore, and makes me look ten years younger." "I think so, too," responded the "brute," still absorbed in his paper.

FIRST BOY: "See here! Didn't I see you running down street yesterday, with Bill Bounce after you, wantin' to lick you?" Second Boy: "Y—e—s." "What did you run for?" "I—I was only running so as to get him away from home, so his mother couldn't see him fightin'; but by the time we was out of sight of his house we got in sight of our house; and then, as my mother would see me if I stopped to hit him, I went in, so as to be out o' temptation."

HE WAS ENGAGED.—FOND Lover: "Is your pa in, Addie?" Gentle Maiden: "Yes, but you may come in." F. L.: "I don't think he likes me, and he might—" G. M.: "There's no need of being afraid; he is engaged." F. L.: "Engaged is he?" G. M.: "Y—e—s. He stayed out till after twelve last night and went off this morning without giving ma a chance to talk to him. She is talking to him now, and he won't be in this part of the house for the next three hours. Come right in."

SLY AMY: "How nice it is to be accomplished!" remarked Miss Amy, while at an evening party. "I sometimes envy Tillis Upjohn. She plays the zither, the guitar, the piano and the violin, and sings like a nightingale. She paints beautifully, too. I can't do any of these things." Mr. Peduncle: "You can do hammered brass work, can't you?" he interrogated, with apparently sudden interest. Sly Amy: "My goodness, no!" she replied. "I don't believe I have any talent. I can cook well—that is about all." Mr. Peduncle happened into the private office of a middle-aged merchant the next day, and remarked: "Mr. Petherbridge, I should like permission to pay my addresses to your daughter, Miss Amy."

YELLOWLY, who is waiting for his sweetheart to dress, is being entertained by her little sister. "What beautiful curling hair you have," says Yellowly, to the little girl; "does it curl, naturally?" "No," answers the little one, frankly; "Sister Maude does it up in papers for me every night." Yellowly: "And does your sister Maude do her own up in papers, too?" Sister: "Nop. She just throws hers on the bureau, and curls it next morning."

THERE is a good story told of a contemporary novelist who became so ill that his wife was obliged to engage a night-nurse to attend him. At 1 A.M. his wife went into his bedroom, and found the nurse reading. "Who gave that woman a book?" she asked, in a whisper. "I, my dear." "What book is it?" "My last work." "Good gracious!" cried madam, with alarm. "How imprudent! Don't you know it is necessary for her to keep awake?"

BISHOP WILBERFORCE had rather a liking for a quiet game of billiards. One day, in a country house where he was staying, he had lost a game to his host, and with the game his temper, the result being that he broke the cue over his knee. Instantly recollecting himself, he apologized effusively to his host, who replied: "I beg of your lordship not to think of the matter. I am glad it occurred, as I was always desirous to see what a bishop was like when he felt inclined to swear."

DOCTOR MACADAM used to tell of a tipsy Scotchman making his way home on a bright Sunday morning when the good folk were wending their way to the kirk. A little dog pulled a ribbon from the hand of a lady who was leading it, and as it ran from her, she appealed to the first passer-by, who happened to be the inebriate, asking him to whistle to her poodle. "Woman," he retorted, with that solemnity of visage which only a Scotchman can assume—"woman, this is no day for whustlin'!"

SUNDAY-School Superintendent: "Can any of you tell me why Sunday is called the day of rest?" Little Dick (holding up his hand): "I kin. It's 'cause we get up early and hurry through breakfast so's to dress in time for Sunday-school, and then hurry to Sunday-school, so we won't be late, and then skip inter church 'fore the bell stops ringin' and then go home to dinner and get fixed up for afternoon service, and then get supper an' go to bed so pa and ma can get ready for evening service. That's all we do."

A SOMEWHAT dwarfish sportsman from London was out shooting on the moors in the Highlands, accompanied by a gillie, who, by his stalwart proportions, presented a singular contrast to his employer. The midges pestered Donald sorely; and the sportsman, wishing to take a rise out of his man, remarked, "How is it, Donald, that these insects annoy you so much, and never interfere with me?" "Ay, weel, sir," replied Donald, looking down at the pigny specimen of the aristocracy before him, "I'm thinkin', sir, that mebbe they himna noticed you yet."

A BABY'S accomplishments are as varied as they are numerous. It can keep a household in turmoil all day and in consternation all night, with a provoking self-consciousness that it didn't half try. It has a wonderful faculty for sleeping in the day time when it ought to be awake, and of being awake at night when it ought to be asleep. It can wear out a pair of shoes in twenty-four hours and its mother's patience in one. It can beat the hired girl breaking dishes by two or three laps, and needn't get out of its mother's lap to do it. It is large enough to occupy the whole of the bed at once, and yet small enough to creep into the kitchen drain, selecting the time for the feat just when its mother has put on it a white, newly-laundred dress. It will yell like a Comanche Indian if a pin merely touches its anatomy, and yet it will fall down a flight of stairs and not mind it any more than a book-agent would. It can be sweet, patient, serene, when alone, yet, when trotted out for exhibition, will show much of its mother's temper and all of its father's depravity. It can lighten its mother's burdens by adding to them, a paradox that does not need a diagram.



## SOCIETY.

THERE is an endeavour to push forward fruit of all kinds as a bonnet trimming.

PRINCE GEORGE OF WALES is as good a messmate as he is hardworking as an officer, and that is saying a good deal.

PRINCE ALBERT VICTOR will be the first of the Royal Family to have visited our outlying Indian possessions.

THE well-proportioned woman wears a shoe one-half the size of the glove that her hand calls for. Thus if a woman wears a six glove she should wear a three shoe.

THOSE queer samplers that grandmothers used to work are being hunted up, all that is left of them, as patterns for little girls to learn needle-work and their letters at the same time.

THE latest addition to the Royal Family—the Duke of Fife—is an extraordinarily heavy smoker. A "bulldog" briar pipe is his favourite.

THE Princess Sophia's bridal train is a real work of art of its kind. The material is of white satin, adorned all over with splendid Renaissance silver embroidery. Its length is three and a half metres, and its breadth one and three-quarters metres.

AN ingenuous female has hit upon the idea of a "dress album," in which tiny cuttings of every gown belonging to its owner are to be chronologically arranged, under the dates on which they were first or specially worn.

In foreign countries it appears that fashionable widows of very mature age are now taking to the cloisters and joining Orders, some of them through trouble and being left alone in life.

A LONDON journal states that shirts of chain armour which cost about £120 are worn by more than one distinguished person on the Continent.

FRIENDSHIP rings, in the United States, have come to be the newest thing affected by the seashore maiden. The number worn denominated the standing of a belle. Her admirers spend hours filing out the centre of a ten-cent piece until it comes to fit the finger which it is intended to adorn.

THE Queen greatly admired the Kerry cattle which were exhibited at Windsor Royal Show, and liked them so much that several have been introduced into the Royal dairy herd at Frogmore, and the Prince of Wales has bought a few for Sandringham. The Kerry cattle are very pretty animals, and they are such excellent dairy cows that they are becoming formidable rivals to the Jersey breed.

AN English Ambassador at the Court of Constantinople returned home recently bringing with him several Turkish servants, whose knowledge of the English language consisted only of a few catch phrases, which they delivered with a charming disregard of their meaning. One of these servants was trained to wait at table, and was serving the Ambassador's lady with a glass of claret. This task he performed with Oriental grace, and with the sweet remark, delivered with an excellent English accent: "Allow me to give you a glass of wine, my darling." He had caught the phrase from the Ambassador's lips, and had reproduced it to the polite horror of the assembled company.

THE Empress Eugénie has been on a visit to the Queen at Balmoral. The Empress is looking very well, but much aged. Her hair is now completely white, and she has very heavy lines under the eyes. Still it is impossible not to recognise her, even at a little distance, on account of the exceptional elegance of her figure and walk. People are surprised at the excellence of her English.

WHEN a child the Princess Beatrice was what is known as an *enfant terrible*, one who asks the most extraordinary and awkward-to-be-answered questions, but she has ever been most notorious for her want of pride, and, indeed, has always been chafed on this score by her hero and idol, her eldest brother.

## STATISTICS.

THERE are thirty-two thousand benefit and burial clubs registered in England and Wales, with funds which amount to fifty-five million dollars.

How many pins come into London? Here is a problem for the astute. One wholesale house in the City this season placed an order with a Stroud firm for six tons weight of these useful articles!

THERE are 3,000,000 of people who walk about London's streets daily, and in so doing wear away a ton of leather particles from their boots and shoes. This would in a year form a leather strip one inch wide, and long enough to extend from London to New York.

THE number of seats provided in the London and North-Western Company's carriage stock at the present time is:—First-class, 22,067; second-class, 22,506; third-class, 119,500; total, 164,703. In 1871 the numbers were:—First-class, 19,462; second-class, 28,768; third-class, 44,960; total, 93,190.

THE passenger traffic between England and the Continent, *via* the Dover route, has again reached the enormous total of 13,946 persons for a single week. The London, Chatham, and Dover Company have already conveyed considerably over 100,000 more passengers than in the corresponding period of the last Paris Exhibition.

## GEMS.

WINDY prayers and a horror of dancing don't guarantee that a man has Christianity; the question is, if he pays his debts and keeps his hens in his own yard.

As a man's "yes" and "no," so his character. A prompt "yes" or "no" marks the firm, the quick, the decided character; and the slow, the cautious or timid.

ONE strong, well-directed blow sends the nail truer to its home than do a dozen coaxing taps. One fit and earnest word carries more weight than does a yard of high-flown eloquence.

THE man who has never tried the companionship of a little child has carelessly passed by one of the greatest pleasures of life, as one passes a rare flower without plucking it, or knowing its value.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

Do not scrape the inside of frying pans, as after this operation any preparation fried is liable to catch or burn to the pan. If the pan has black inside, rub it with a hard crust of bread, and wash in hot water, mixed with a little soda.

ORANGE CHEESE CAKES.—Take out the pulp from two oranges (Seville if possible), beat the pulp until it is quite tender, put it into a mortar and beat it into a paste, with twice the weight of the oranges in pounded sugar; then add the pulp and strained juice of the oranges, with a piece of butter the size of a walnut. Beat all these ingredients well together, and lay the orange mixture in some patty pans lined with puff paste.

APPLE AND BREAD PUDDING.—Cut three slices of bread from a stale loaf—they should not be any thicker than a quarter of an inch; pare a pound of good baking apples, cut them into quarters, and entirely remove the core; then slice them very thin. Well butter a good-sized pie-dish, and lay at the bottom one of the slices of bread, cut to fit the dish; put upon this a layer of the apples, a good sprinkling of sugar, and a few small pieces of butter; next another slice of bread, apples, sugar, and so on until the dish is as full as required; pour over all one pint of milk, and bake in a moderate oven for about an hour and a half, or until the apples feel quite soft when a fork is pressed into them.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

THE latest wonder is a machine whereby pictures may be transmitted by telegraph.

It is a curious and suggestive fact that drunkenness in Damascus is called by the natives "the English disease."

AN American inventor has patented an electric contribution-box for church use. Whenever a button or piece of tin is deposited in the box an electric bell rings and informs the congregation of the fact.

IN Russia there are sixty-seven immense spinning mills, employing an aggregate of 115,000,000 spindles. The principal centres of this industry are the provinces of Moscow and Vladimir. Russia has 488 cotton-weaving establishments, which give employment to 80,500.

IN September of last year a native of India wrote to the Post Office authorities to state that he wished to despatch the ashes of his cremated brother by parcel post, in order that they might be cast into the sacred Ganges. He was officially informed that if the parcel was not over 11 lbs. he might send it with safety; if over that weight, the department could offer no facilities.

"If I gave you a pound of metal, and ordered you to make the most out of it, what kind of metal would you select?" asked a well-known American jeweller. "Gold, of course," was the prompt reply. "I'd prefer a pound of steel," said the jeweller, "and I would have it made into hair springs for watches. A pound of such springs would sell for one hundred and forty thousand dollars."

THE costliest of all leathers is known as piano leather, and is used solely for covering piano keys. The world's supply of it comes from Thuringia in Germany, where a family of tanners hand down the secret of its preparation from father to son. The skins that make it grow upon the grey deer, a species found only in the neighbourhood of the great Northern lakes. They are worth tenpence a pound when just stripped off. When they come back to us as piano leather the price has risen to over three guineas a pound.

WHEN Captain Cook discovered Australia he saw some of the natives on the shore with a dead animal of some sort in their possession, and sent sailors in a little boat to buy it of them. When it came on board he saw it was something quite new, so he sent the sailors back to inquire its name. The sailor asked, but, not being able to make the natives understand, received the answer, "I don't know," or, in the Australian language, "Kangaroo." The sailors supposed this was the name of the animal, and so reported it. Thus, the name of the curious animal is the "I don't know."

ONE of the strangest stories touching the origin of woman is told by the Madagascarenes. In so far as the creation of man goes, the legend is not unlike that related by Moses, only that the fall came before Eve arrived. After the man had eaten the forbidden fruit he became affected with a boil on the leg, out of which, when it burst, came a beautiful girl. The man's first thought was to throw her to the pigs, but he was commanded by a messenger from heaven to let her play among the diggings until she was of marriageable age, then to make her his wife. He did so, called her Baboura, and she became the mother of all races of men.

THE melling-bottle is building up quite a little history of its own, and will soon have developed into such a very elaborate article that it will be quite difficult to associate it with the humble and modest little phial we once carried to church and the theatre. It seems only the other day that we considered a wee glass bottle, with its infinitesimal interior of cork saturated with aromatic vinegar, quite sufficient for our needs, but now we fancy we cannot restore ourselves without a Bradding-nagian receptacle for pungent salts, whilst drawing-room tables are no longer complete without one or two huge vessels of restoratives that might well be mistaken for decanters.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**KITT.**—The narcissus implies egotism.

**WILLOW.**—It depends on what causes them.

**THURAL.**—Consult the table of relationships in your Bible.

**VINCENT LEDBURY.**—A soldier's pension cannot be attached for a debt.

**MARGE.**—Horatio is an Italian name, and means worthy to be beheld.

**LEONIE.**—Apply to the Secretary, Zoological Society, 8, Hanover Square, London.

**MOLLY.**—In social standing they are equal, but a clergyman would take precedence.

**LESTER.**—No, an apprentice cannot claim his wages while he is incapacitated by illness.

**DORA.**—We know of nothing that will permanently remove superfluous hair. We advise you to let it alone.

**SHORT HAIR.**—You can only have patience; at 14 years of age there is plenty of time for the hair to grow.

**BARTON, H.**—The right of a landlord to distrain for rent cannot be defeated by bankruptcy or a deed of assignment.

**ADMIRER.**—The hymn entitled "From Greenland's Icy Mountains" was written by Bishop Reginald Heber, in 1800.

**NEIGHBOUR.**—You can yourself lop off the branches which overhang your property; but that is the extent of your remedy.

**CHARLIE.**—Either a Peer or a Commoner can be Prime Minister; if the latter, he must of course have a seat in the House.

**ONE IN TROUBLE.**—Your case is one of those on which it is always better to have legal advice. You should consult a solicitor.

**DIANA.**—1. Most likely in allusion to the great personal beauty of the poet. 2. The sure must depend entirely on the cause.

**HARABED.**—If the business is really the property of the wife, and is carried on for her benefit, the wife alone can be sued for its debts.

**SAMBO.**—There is no romance on the subject. Abolard and Heloise were real personages, whose letters are well known in French literature.

**T. T.**—Life sentences may be reduced for good behaviour in prison; but we do not know the rules (if any) which govern such reductions.

**JOHN SCALPEL.**—1. A man who has a judicial separation from his wife may not marry again while his wife is alive. 2. Not unless she breaks the law.

**FAIR FLORA.**—1. All chemists sell belladonna, but we should not recommend its use except under medical advice. 2. A brother has no authority whatever.

**EMELINE.**—1. We never attempt to read characters from the handwriting. 2. Emily, from the Saxon, means a nurse; Elizabeth, Hebrew, the oath of Heaven; Laura, Latin, prosperity.

**A DRESSMAKER.**—We should certainly not advise you to emigrate on the chance of getting work. There are plenty of dressmakers in Australia already. Hard-working young women are wanted as servants.

**AMOS.**—Probably you have not done growing, and will fill out by-and-by. In the meantime pay attention to your health, and eat plenty of farinaceous food. The hair on your face will no doubt come in good time.

**M. S. K.**—1. We hardly understand your question. Every one has his or her own taste in the matter of vegetables. 2. We never give trade addresses in our correspondence columns. Apply to a hairdresser.

**LADY DAME.**—1. Your parents are the proper persons to give you advice on this or any other matter. You cannot take such a step as you propose without their consent. 2. The writing is a good hand, but careless.

**LAW.**—If a cyclist refuses to dismount at the request of a policeman who wishes to take his name for riding without a lamp, the policeman is justified in compelling him to dismount, even if the means are necessarily rough.

**DANDY.**—Any wholesale tobacconist will give you all the information you want, and will supply you with stock. We cannot recommend one more than another. Most likely the paper you refer to is Tobacco, published at 35, Castle Street, Finsbury Square, E.C.

**WILL O' THE WISP.**—Paint the corns at bedtime for three or four nights following with a saturated solution of salicylic acid in collodion. After a few days the hard corns will peel off. This should never be used for soft corns, nor allowed to touch healthy skin.

**PAULINE.**—1. Many ladies wear their hair short still, though it is not absolutely the fashion. 2. A lady is seldom sensible enough to admit that she is an old maid. Age has very little to do with it. Some are as old-maidish at twenty as others are at double that age.

**BERTHA.**—We should advise you to be careful. The gentleman may mean honestly, and we hope for your sake that he does, but it is not usual for a person of superior rank to seek a wife whose circumstances are so widely different. It would be a great pity for you to give your heart to a man who perhaps is only amusing himself at your expense. We are always happy to give what advice we can without asking any payment.

**UNHAPPY NEIL.**—The whole trouble seems to be a lover's quarrel. If that is the case, pocket your pride, and "make up." It would be discreet for you to bow to the young man, as "cutting" him would not only be unkind and un ladylike, but would also occasion scandal.

**UNHAPPY DOLLY.**—In order to preserve your peace of mind, and insure your future happiness, we should advise you to immediately dismiss him without asking for an explanation of his words. Young girls cannot be too cautious in allowing their lovers to kiss and caress them.

**POLLY.**—Frisettes certainly wear away the hair, and, if possible, one ought to do without. Perhaps you will be able to manage by keeping your combings, fluffing them up into the shape of rolls, and using them instead of frisettes, than which they would be much lighter and less warm.

**VIOLET AND FENELLA.**—1. The ladies are both nice-looking; the elder has a womanly, refined face, and the youngest is a bonnie, bright girl, though appearing a little triste in her photograph. 2. Violet writes a nice legible hand. 3. We never attempt character-reading in any way.

**B. B.**—The grandee is the highest rank of Spanish nobility. In former times they claimed excessive privileges, even to making war upon the king without incurring the guilt of treason; but these privileges have been gradually restricted, and now amount to comparatively nothing.

**ETIQUETTE.**—There is no etiquette in the matter amongst friends. A lady going to a strange place to live would naturally wait to be called upon by her new neighbours, but after an absence from home she would as naturally go to see her intimate acquaintances without waiting for them to come and see her.

## AUTUMN.

See, the hills are red and golden  
In the sunset's after-glow,  
And the autumn leaves are falling,  
Filling all the vale below;  
Now the streamlet in its murmur  
Seems to breathe a note of refrain,  
For the hectic flush of autumn  
Is upon the hill and plain.

Minor strains of rill and river  
In a dirge-like music fall  
On the ear, as we listen  
To the robin's plaintive call  
To his mate, who answers low him  
And keeps time with answering lay,  
As if bird and waning nature  
Were in sympathy to-day.

Look! the golden rose and aster  
Are a flame upon the hill,  
And the maple tree and alder  
Bow subservient to a will  
That hath power to change their beauty  
From this crimson after-glow  
Of the fading touch of autumn,  
To the dust—whence they must go.

Daffodils and roses fallen,  
Prone upon the ground are laid,  
And the dead leaves heap the hollows  
That the autumn rain has made.  
And the lesson sad they teach us,  
As we note their swift decay—  
Though we live and have a being,  
We, like them, shall pass away.

N. O.

**SYBIL.**—It would be better to wait, for a time at least. Marriage is one of the things that cannot be undone, and a drop from comparative affluence to narrow means is a trying test of love. There is an old saying "that when poverty comes in at the door, love flies out at the window." It might be so in your case.

**DAK.**—An Englishman's house is his castle, to do what he pleases in, providing that it is not absolutely injurious to the neighbourhood. At the same time a little neighbourly courtesy should be exercised in the matter of piano playing, which is often a sore affliction where walls are thin and neighbours nervous.

**CUTTER.**—A fortune awaits the man who can invent or discover a substitute for leather. For every other article of dress substitutes are in regular use; but the tanned skin of animals, as a covering for the foot, and for harness, belting, &c., is without a substitute. For flexibility and durability, "there's nothing like leather."

**TROUBLED.**—The disease known as writer's cramp is a spasm which affects certain muscles when engaged in the performance of certain acts, but which does not affect them when employed in acts of a different kind. The only sensible remedy that we know of is absolute rest or cessation from the work with which the attack is associated.

**H. L.**—Quicksand is composed chiefly of small particles of mica mixed largely with water. The mica is so smooth that the fragments slip upon each other with the greatest facility, so that any heavy body which displaces them will sink, and continue to sink until a solid bottom is reached. When particles of sand are ragged and angular any weight pressing on them will crowd them together until they are compacted into a solid mass. A sand composed of mica or soapstone, when sufficiently mixed with water, seems incapable of such consolidation.

**D. D.**—No length of absence on the part of the husband makes legal a second marriage by the wife without a divorce; but if the man has been absent seven years, (the wife not knowing nor having means of knowing anything of him during that time), a prosecution for bigamy cannot be sustained if the woman marries again.

**ONE IN DESPAIR.**—The place you mention is in Asia Minor, a country certainly only half civilised. You do not say how you propose to get there, and we can hardly imagine any one out of a lunatic asylum proposing to go there for a husband; you had much better remain an old maid all your days than venture on such an undertaking.

**EMIGRANT.**—A homestead means the house itself, with the outbuildings connected with it, and a part of the land, as the garden, fields, &c. If the debtor have more land than he is legally entitled to, the court in which proceedings to enforce debts against him are taken, will define the limits of his homestead according to the law of the State upon the subject.

**SAUDY MIX.**—1. Probably you require a little medicine, blotches on the skin generally denote such a need. Take plenty of open-air exercise; use cold water abundantly, and avoid eating rich or indigestible articles of food. 2. Cutting the ends of the hair frequently and shampooing the head now and then should make the hair grow. 3. The lady should be the first to bow.

**WEATHER.**—There are about a hundred species of mosquitoes in the world, occurring in all climates. England has eight or ten species, for mosquitoes, as well as Hessian flies, are as common in England as white butterflies. Most, if not all, of the British species bite in very hot weather, when apparently, like their betters, they require more liquid refreshment.

**C. D. F.**—The following would be appropriate for what you want:

"Lantern forth the lightning of thy glance  
On light and silly persons, who  
Boothe with vacant countenance  
Insipid speeches when they woo.  
Never let such with hope pursue."

**MIMMY.**—No wonder you are unhappy; if you really love your husband, and have, as you admit, no cause for your fancies, call common sense to your aid and dismiss them. There is an old proverb that says, "Where there is love there is faith"; and there is another sentence, a line in a time-honoured play, which you might take to heart: "Who make their woes, deserve them." It seems rather as if you were making yours.

**BROWN'S BOY.**—John Paul Jones, who espoused the cause of the colonies in the War of Independence, and aided them as signally, is described as a "short, thick, little fellow, about 5 feet 8 inches in height, and of a dark, swarthy complexion." His father was a gardener. He assumed the cognomen Jones when he settled in Virginia, on a property which had fallen to him on the death of an older brother, but why he assumed it is not known.

**IGNORANT.**—To run amuck is to talk or write on a subject of which you are wholly ignorant. It also means to run about, of, to run against. The Malays under the influence of opium become so excited that they sometimes rush forth with daggers, yelling "Amuck! Amuck!" (kill, kill), and woe be to any one they chance to meet. Pope says:

"Sairey's my weapon, but I'm too discreet  
To run amuck and tilt at all I meet."

**AMBITIOUS.**—You ask a question that is most difficult to advise upon without more knowledge of your tastes and bent of mind than your brief letter affords. Still, we may partly judge from the very nature of your request that you are gifted with more than ordinary intelligence, and in that case you can surely be at no loss to select for yourself such studies as will most advance you intellectually and morally. We would not grudge any trouble to encourage so laudable an object, indeed we should feel much gratification in lending a helping hand, however humble, towards its fulfilment, but besides the reason we have already given, we could hardly afford the space that would be required to direct your further studies. Therefore, though we most cordially sympathise with you, the best counsel we can offer is that you should seek the advice of those who know you—the teachers at the school you have just quitted, for instance—and who would have, if not a greater interest in your inspirations than ourselves, at least that more intimate acquaintance which would make them better guides than a stranger.

THE LONDON READER, Post-free. Three-halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly One Shilling and Eightpence.

ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS and VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of all booksellers.

NOTICE.—Part 333, New Ready, price Sixpence, post free, Eightpence. Also Vol. LIII., bound in cloth, 4s. 6d.

ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 334, Strand, W.C.

††† We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

London: Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by J. R. SPECK; and Printed by WOODFALL and KNEER, 70 to 76, Long Acre, W. C.